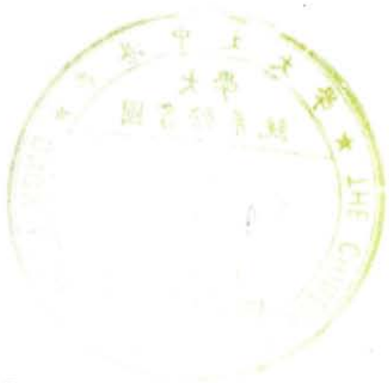
THE LORE OF CHILDHOOD: SUBVERSION OF GENDER SOCIALIZATION IN CERTAIN EXAMPLES OF ENGLISH AND HONG KONG CHILDREN'S FICTION SINCE THE 1860S



BY

MAGGY CHAN MEI LAN

B.A., The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1995

THESIS

Submitted to the Graduate School of
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY IN ENGLISH

Hong Kong

1998

Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis owes a great deal to my two supervisors, Prof Andrew Parkin and Prof Mimi Ching, whose unfailing support is always there starting from my initial process of data collection to the actual writing. Prof Ching sharpened my insights into children's literature. I am most grateful to her for inspiring criticism that helps shape the present work. Prof Parkin gave me much good advice and valuable encouragement. He had read the manuscript at various stages and had passed a sharp pencil over the drafts. Both of them taught me the way of accomplishing a scholarly work. The opportunity of working with them turned the tedious job of thesis writing into memories of warmth and pleasure.

There are many people to whom I would like to express my gratitude. These people include my friends, my family members and the teachers in the Department of English as well as the Department of Education. Special thanks are sent to Prof Yuan, Dr Luk and Dr Crisp, who have taught me a great deal about literary theories and criticism. I would also like to say a word of gratitude to Miss Sirwinnie Cheung for her sincere concern and interest in my work.

Finally, I hope that children all over the world will one day benefit from reading good literature and be inspired by the Muses hiding between the leaves of a book. Childhood is the time for fun. Let none deprive them of the enjoyment of stories.

论文摘要

在海闊天空的世界裡，譜奏著萬千音符，隱約地可讓人聽到從遠方永恆國處傳來的笛聲。那是小飛俠呼喚孩子的樂曲，啟發著小孩尋找童話國的快樂泉源，步向沒有拘束的廣闊空間。

大人們一般都對孩子抱有某種期望，希冀下一代能依循社會訂定的標準而活，好使成人所建構的一切都能維持不變，延續社會的安定。可是，世界的巨輪卻總是毫無止息地滾動著，革新雖然不一定會帶來進步，但突破的第一頁總需要有人揭開。常聽一些大人教訓小孩：女孩子應該文靜優雅，男孩則要勇敢機智。他們把什麼是男孩該做的，什麼是女孩該做的，黑白分明地劃清界線，局限小孩子的創造能力。殊不知小孩們沒有機心地冷眼旁觀，卻真能洞察世情，把大人們都蒙在鼓裏。

可喜的是，不論在西方還是香港，還有一群具有童心的作家沒有保留地說出孩子的心聲，為孩童騰出想像的空間。其實，每個成年人也曾經歷過孩童的年代，只是並非每個成人都會保留一顆孩童的心。《童心》是個先於一切價值判斷的心，這是個優游的心，是生命創發的泉源,它能看見一個更開拓的世界(明報，一九九七年八月三十一日)

我們若能抽空細聽，那不正是孩子的笑聲，孩子的智慧?

Abstract

The limit of the world seems as boundless as the sky and sea; within this vast space, there are all kinds of music. Sent from the Neverland is Peter Pan's flute song. The never-grown-up boy inspires little children to look for the spring of happiness in the realm of fairy tales. To do his best, Peter Pan leads his followers to the genuinely far-ranging world of fantasy.

Adults generally project their thoughts and ideas onto their children. They expect their next generation to follow the social norms in order that the status quo, which has long kept the society running smoothly, can be maintained. Hence, the stability of the society can be prolonged. The spherical world, however, is moving forward like a ceaseless wheel. Reform does not necessarily guarantee progress but somehow someone must take the initiative to turn over a new leaf for a breakthrough. We can sometimes hear adults caution children to behave in a proper manner in accord with their gender: girls have to be gentle and graceful whereas boys need to grow into brave and clever men. Grown-ups have categorized what little boys and girls do in diametrically opposing ways, thus suppressing the very creativity of small children. To the adults' surprise, the little ones are the real philosophers who observe the world objectively and penetrate the heart of matters; they have ingeniously deceived the adults.

Delightfully, whether in the West or in Hong Kong, there is a group of writers who still possess the "child's minds" to speak for children without reserve, preserving an arena for children to imagine. Indeed, every grown-up has experienced the stage of childhood. Yet not every one of them will retain a child's heart. A "'child's heart' is prior to all *a priori* standards. This heart is free of constraints and life-inspiring. It can envisage a more spacious world" (Ming Pao Daily 31 Aug 97).

If we spare some time and listen carefully, isn't that the laughter of the child, the wisdom of the child?

CONTENTS

The Secret Garden

The Secret Garden was what Mary called it when she was thinking of it. She liked the name, and she liked still more the feeling that when its beautiful old walls shut her in, no one knew where she was. It seemed almost like being shut out of the world in some fairy place. The few books she had read and liked had been fairy-story books, and she had read of secret gardens in some of the stories. *Sometimes, people went to sleep in them for a hundred years, where she had thought must be rather stupid* (My emphasis).

Frances Hodgson Burnett, The Secret Garden

Introduction

> Doctors sometimes draw maps of other parts of you, and your own map can become intensely interesting, but catch them trying to draw a map of a child's mind, which is not only confused, but keeps going round all the time.
>
> J. M. Barrie, *Peter Pan*

To emerge from the labyrinth built inside the child's mind consumes the whole life of each ordinary adult, but there are some exceptional grown-ups[1] who never fully grow up. They are the subversive children's writers, the only adults whom children admire because they know the secret codes of childhood. Subversive children's writers never transform a little bunny into a gentlemanly-dressed tutor of manners. Despite the pervasiveness of didacticism in the early examples of children's literature, subversive children's writers show no compromise with the biggest trend; they create an imaginary world which stuns the conservative adults while offering a festive time to children.

The time of reading subversive children's literature is stealthy but blissful. It seems that most adults are inherently sadistic because they try all means to deter the little ones from reading "rubbish"[2] and so deprive children of their happy times. Certainly adults want obedient and malleable children. At school, headmasters and

---

[1] Grown-ups and children are differentiated by their ideologies, not by the mere fact of their ages. There are some adults who never grow up as "the mental child" remains alive in them even after they have passed the stage of childhood.

[2] In "A Defence of Rubbish", Peter Dickinson mentions the beneficial effects for children to read the so-called trash stuff. By "rubbish" Dickinson refers to "all forms of reading matter which contain to the adult eye no visible value, either aesthetic or educational" (74). However, adults may not make the best judgement because "[t]he adult eye is not necessarily a perfect instrument for discerning certain sorts of values". (75-6)

teachers expect students to be dutiful and hardworking. Who would like to waste his energy spanking a naughty child? An expert even warned in Time (dated 25 August, 1997) that "the kids who had been spanked had become increasingly antisocial". But most adults want children to support the status quo, don't they? Inevitably, teaching children to read run-of-the-mill children's books with moralistic bunnies has once given much hope to adults who are at their wits' end. As a result, adults become obsessed with children's texts that teach morals and behaviour. Adults recommend such texts to children because of their practical values and more importantly, the effects of childhood reading are long lasting. To the dismay of child readers, subversive children's literature such as Tom Sawyer or The Wizard of Oz has once "been judged unworthy and has to be bought in shops or borrowed from friends"[3] (Lurie x); however, its unorthodox circulation among children adds to the excitement of reading it in secret.

Like many other prohibited activities, reading stories about subversion offers an alluring temptation to children. The natural tendency to do forbidden things attracts plenty of children to subversive writings, many of which such as The Secret Garden[4], Peter Pan, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland or Little Women have now become

---

[3] Peter Hunt also mentions the point that children's books that are highly appraised by adults may not always become children's favourites. Those uncanonical writers like Enid Blyton, Roald Dahl or Judy Blume, in contrast, are the most popular because their works "are the more likely to be of and for childhood, and less likely to conform to adult social and literary norms" (An Introduction 6).

[4] A book like The Secret Garden does not receive much attention in its first publication owing to its "ahead of its time" ideas, but has now turned out to be canonical reading in high schools.

To overcome restraints can be exciting challenges; Rosemary Jackson quotes from Franz Kafka to convey how suppression is unbearable to human beings in general:

> Human nature, essentially changeable, unstable as the dust, can endure no restraint: if it binds itself it soon begins to tear madly at its bonds, until it rends everything asunder, the wall, the bonds and its very self. . . . (1)

If all human beings are annoyed by unreasonable restrictions, then it will sound even more unreasonable for adults to constrain the freedom of children. In view of adults' narrow-mindedness, a study of subversive children's literature tells them more about the ways that children learn.

Recent study of children's literature reveals how on the one hand adults impose their expectations upon the young, and how on the other hand children and some writers join forces to subvert adults. This tantalizing magnetism at either end of the study attracts critics to this side or that, though some may wriggle their way through to the pure enjoyment of innocent pleasure offered in nonsensical stories and rhymes. Sometimes, a peculiar writing style, humour and irrationality turn out to be more attractive than the study of themes and content. Research in children's literature, according to Kay E. Vandergrift, unravels more than discrete units like the text, the society and the child reader. Study in children's literature also brings us to an examination of the authors, "the larger world of literature, and the world outside

literature" (Vandergrift 26), as well as all their engaging linkages[5]. The current study strikes a balance to work towards the latter discovery.

Some critics, for instance Jacqueline Rose, are exemplars for those in support of the view that children's books are indoctrination in disguise, hence "the Impossibility of Children's Fiction"[6]. She shows her agreement with the view that children's books, after various types of censorship from adults, have adopted an identity as a "covert form of indoctrination" (Hunt 6):

> . . . adults write children's fiction and evaluate it, and in doing this they take into account not children, but their conception of what children ought to be and ought to learn. Children themselves are powerless to create their own literature or to control what they perceive . . . . Adults want children to read certain books for social reasons. Consequently, children's books and the criticism of children's books are a form of social power. (McGillis 17-8)

Rose's definition has precluded aesthetic elements from the genre written for children. Children's literature in her sense is no longer created for art's sake. Rose has only given us a facet of the prism and labelled what we should call "educational" children's

---

[5] For details, see Vandergrift's Children's Literature: Theory, Research, and Teaching. Vandergrift thinks that research activities should not be conducted at the expense of literature. A literary critic should try to preserve the integrity of a literary work instead of impairing it. According to Vandergrift, "[r]esearch should never become a means for the destruction of literature, rather, it should increase both our understanding of and our appreciation for that which we study" (26).

texts/books. For all literature, whether it belongs to adults or children, does not necessarily "[toughen] the moral fiber" (McGillis 9).

Critics like Jacqueline Rose, Fred Inglis, or Jack Zipes have been in the first place blithely evaluating children's literature on its moral worth; they have also inadequately treated children's books in an exclusive manner as an adults' enterprise, despite the very fact that its readers are children per se. Although it may exceed the power of a literary critic to measure the extent of influence exerted by children's literature, (s)he is undoubtedly in a favorable position to examine through the text ideas conveyed by the writer, hence assuming in the use of children's literature a possible effect upon young readers. The Marxist and feminist critics have even gone so far as to claim that "Literature has a powerful and direct effect on the reader; it has a socializing power because readers assume a one-to-one relationship with the characters depicted in a work of literature" (McGillis 12). In view of this possibility, more and more people come to the belief that children's literature has its functional role and they have considered it to be an "educational apparatus" (McGillis 18). As Zohar Shavit points out in Poetics of Children's Literature (1986), children's literature is "a vehicle for education, a major means of teaching and indoctrinating" (McGillis 18).

However dominant the adults' power is, stacks of subversive children's books still manage to escape from the close scrutiny of "respectable" grown-ups and gain the

---

[6] Jacqueline Rose has a book called The Case of Peter Pan, the Impossibility of Children's Fiction, published in 1984 by the Macmillan Press.

recognition of the young for their liberating power. Alison Lurie discloses to us that books which retain their popularity nowadays, such as Little Women (1868), Peter Pan (1911), The Wonderful Wizard of Oz (1900) or Tom Sawyer, are imbued with ideas adults at the time did not anticipate:

> These books, and others like them, recommended--even celebrated--daydreaming, disobedience, answering back, running away from home, and concealing one's private thoughts and feelings from unsympathetic grown-ups. They overturned adult pretensions and made fun of adult institutions, including school and family. (Lurie x)

Books with these ideas appeal to the instinctive rebellious power within all of us, arousing our skeptical views about existing structures and conventions. The ragged adventure narrated in these subversive stories scrapes the smooth surface of the child's petrified spirit in a conventional world; the sparkle produced by the abrasion warms up his heart and unleashes his impetus to break through platitudes instead of being satisfied with an appropriated role and identity.

The opposing views presented by Jacqueline Rose and Alison Lurie indicate two main directions from which children's books are created. Of course there are many nursery rhymes written with sheer appreciation of linguistic or stylistic beauty, and they deserve to be put in another category. Peter Hunt in his discussion about contemporary criticism on children's literature includes both standpoints presented by Rose and Lurie.

Hunt shows his predilection to opt for Lurie's notion, wherein a far more enlivening world is invented by imagination and far excels that existing in our mundane life. Because I enjoy the fantastic, I support Lurie's view that children's literature is sometimes subversive and so deserves our serious concern and study:

> Of course, in a sense much great literature is subversive, since its existence implies that what matters is art, imagination, and truth. In what we call the real world, on the other hand, what usually counts is money, power, and public success. (Lurie xi)

The Design of this study

In the next chapter (Chapter 2), I shall deal briefly with the historical backgrounds of Western and Hong Kong children's literature. Then I shall explore subversive elements in children's literature before passing to specific features of subversion of adults' world in the texts chosen for the current study.

Subversion of Gender Socialization

Since children's writers may find their ways to readers' hearts through different aspects of subversion, in order to narrow the scope of my analysis, I focus sharply on the subversion of gender identity. The traditional notion that little boys and girls have to follow the designated masculine or feminine role models no longer seems to be an unquestioned assumption with the emergence of more and more challenges posed by feminists and true admirers of children. Feminists uphold the liberation of the female

and the changing of patriarchal domination, whereas adults, identifying with children, try to retain the innocence of childhood, to an extent that social values should be removed from the perfection of the "innocent age". Although working with different motives, both groups aim at the same outcome of subverting constraints.

Certainly, changes in the concept of gender have already been taking place, in our actual daily life as well as the imaginary world established in children's works. Consequently, more subversive characters emerge in children's texts and appear to rebel against the gender roles prescribed by parents, teachers, relatives or their surrogates. Although sometimes a child character realizes the expectations of adults, (s)he may not sympathize with grown-ups who want children to be "good" by adults' standards. There is a culture of games among children[7] and practices of pleasure which help maintain a domain with no worry and sadness[8]. If adults do not put on their commanding mien, all children will be as free as Heidi and Peter in the pasture without minding the barrier of gender.

---

[7] Peter Hunt states that the concept of childhood can be defined in terms of "responsibility versus lack of responsibility" or "work versus play". If we follow Le Guin's argument that adults are associated with work, then we may be able to put children under the category of play. Later on Hunt also supplements his idea by saying that work "forms a contrastive subtext to the golden play-world of the child" (An Introduction 175).

[8] In a report by Varsity, issued in April 1996, several lecturers who have their children learning in the Chung Chi Nursery School at the Chinese University appreciate the school's practice of learning through play:

> While other children of the same age are busy doing homework, kids there are given good time to enjoy freedom, play and use their imagination at this school. (Yeo 23)

Although the portrayal of unconventional female protagonists started much earlier than the phase of the feminist movement of the 1970s, the rigour of that particular movement also had significant impact on the publishing industry:

> . . . female readers needed new kinds of texts, and stories were printed that contained female protagonists who followed the traditional *bildungsroman* pattern, who refused to become "little women," who defied cultural attitudes to establish a new concept of feminism. (May 23)

In the face of cultural and social evolutions, the representation of gender has changed accordingly. While reviewing James Finn Garner's Politically Correct Bedtime Stories, Dr Chan Kin Man, a sociologist, urges that "changes must be made [in children's reading materials] as society's attitudes and expectations towards gender have altered" (Cheng 24). As society changes at a breakneck pace, writers often promptly adjust their views as a natural response to the variations, for writers are responsible for both reflecting the society and shaping it.

Lewis Carroll is ahead of his time in creating a fantasy world with a subversive female character like Alice, who manages to indulge in pleasure deriving from daydreaming and disobedience. Carroll's writings react against the model female character of his predecessors because "the depiction of a strong female character who is active rather than passive is a novelty, particularly for a story written in the nineteenth

century" (Goodman 19). In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (1865) or Through the Looking Glass (1871), one can discover the unconventional feminine side represented in little Alice and conclude that "Alice is at odds in a male-dominated, male-controlled world" (Goodman 17). Being a character with audacity and shrewdness[9], Alice motions her readers to an unbiased and discrimination-free world, daring what is forbidden to girls and challenging the authority with the kind of judgement possessed by an innocent child. Though without regret, her dauntlessness and assertive selfhood have excluded her from the inheritance of feminine ideals:

> Except for her proper manner, she is by no means a good little girl in mid-Victorian terms. She is not gentle, timid, and docile, but active, brave, and impatient; she is highly critical of her surroundings and of the adults she meets. At the end of both books she fights back, reducing the Queen of Hearts' court to a pack of playing cards and the Red Queen to a kitten, crying "Who cares for *you?*" and "I can't stand this any longer!" (Lurie 7)

Impatient and self-willed though she is, Alice has brought forth a penetrating insight into whatever she encounters in the underground world, duly etching her remarkable sharpness upon the touchstone of intelligence.

---

[9] Horace Gregory's "foreword" in the Signet Classic edition has the following comment for little Alice:

> Throughout her adventures she remains untouched by a sense of loss or of human tragedy. She is both childlike and shrewd, and if at times bewildered, she is never stupid. As heroine, she is as brilliant, and almost as ruthlessly clear-headed, as Becky Sharp. (v)

Besides its innovative character, the book Alice's Adventures in Wonderland also opens a new page in the history of children's literature as well as the criticism of children's literature. Despite the sole motive for entertaining the Liddell girls on a boating trip, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland has been a useful weapon to downplay the authority of the established order in the adults' world:

> All the adults, especially those who resemble governesses or professors, are foolish, arbitrary, cruel, or mad. The only wholly decent and sensible person is Alice herself. (Lurie 6)

To know of such characters like Alice in Carroll's stories or Jo March in Little Women gives much consolation to feminist critics because the existence of such characters prophesies a new era in the cultural valuing of women. Carroll's Alice stories, being the precursors of many subversive children's stories, are often cited in the discussion of gender:

> Gender *does* matter in analysis of the close relationship between the author, Carroll, and young Alice Liddell, just as it matters in the text itself. Gender is also relevant in the sense that most of the creatures encountered by the fictional Alice are male or endowed with masculine power and authority, often expressed through their 'mastery' of, and experimentation with, language. (Goodman 19)

Instead of being towered over by the dominating males, Alice wittily turns them into clumsy and uncoordinated giants and at the same time, expresses a distinctive value at her time. This new assessment of females and children, as presented in Alice's adventures, is profoundly influential along with its critical charges of "human pretentiousness" and "the deceits and small cruelties practised by adults on children" (Inglis 103). Alice's stories, while serving as a stark contrast to some moral-teaching books[10], prepare us for a series of attack against the status quo.[11]

Methodology

The theme "subversion of gender socialization" will be the main focus in this research and the primary methodology used here is qualitative. In other words, the present study is a thematic content analysis and is undertaken to examine selected examples of subversion, especially those occurring in the process of gender socialization mentioned in English and Hong Kong children's literature since 1860.

By gender, I refer to the brief definition given by Kathy G. Short in her research guide for children's literature, that is, "the socially constructed roles ascribed to males

---

[10] Prize-winning novelist Penelope Lively believes that the English literary tradition of children's literature had found its way to eccentricity and fun ever since the classic Alice's Adventures in Wonderland "broke the mould of Victorian piety and paved the way for Edith Nesbit, for The Wind in the Willows, for Beatrix Potter and A. A. Milne and the children's novel of today" (2).

[11] Some children's stories, though designed with entertaining comic episodes, have carried hidden messages with them. Some even have spices of right and wrong sprinkled on the surface. Our youthful experience of reading has little departed from such tedious things as: "[s]it up straight, dear. Don't go too far into the woods. Say thank you to Aunt Etta. Come along, stop daydreaming and fill in your workbook. Now, darling, you mustn't make up stories" (Lurie x).

and females in every society" (23). Usually, researchers conducting a gender study, as suggested by Short, deal with issues like "sexism, socialization, role models, gender equality, power, feminist perspectives within texts, and feminist content analyses." (23). I do not depart from the ideas that there are socialization and role models in children's texts and definitely, there are gender inequalities. However, unlike most critics who are too anxious to unveil how depictions of such themes would seriously affect children's perception of their own images, I would rather display with optimism that in the field of children's literature, there is a team of subversive writers who commit themselves to write from children's perspectives. Under their descriptions, little girls become school heroes, the saviors of unrepentant adults or adventurers who journey alone. Moreover, subversive writers allow little boys to be lovely, caring and emotional instead of turning them into apathetic characters who never drop a tear. The barrier of gender is demolished in a large amount of subversive children's literature and child characters in this genre are no longer shown to be passive and docile. In general, "subversion" can be understood as the overthrow of a political system. Yet in this research, I have borrowed the word with a slightly different meaning to describe a skeptical attitude to the status quo.

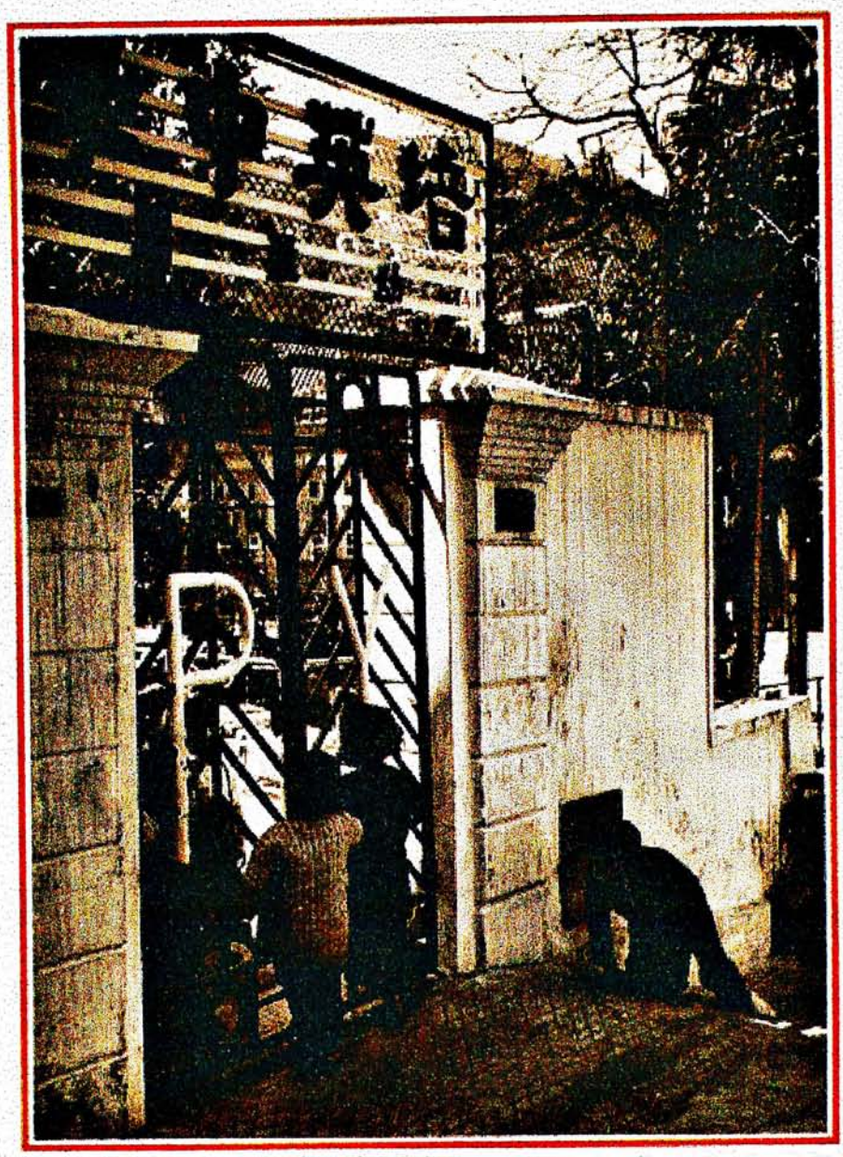
The English book list used in the present study is designed from children's stories (for age range 8-12) published by Puffin or Penguin. As Peter Hunt suggests in Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature, "Penguin is probably the most respected

paperback publisher in the world, with the most extensive and prestigious list. . . ." (29). Except for a few examples, most texts are taken from the category of "growing up" stories found within Puffin's Parent's Guide. The choice of research materials is based on the Parent's Guide because titles listed in it are also suitable for the National Curriculum for England and Wales, so the books are assumed to enjoy a large readership. The selected "growing up" stories link, in various ways, the development of children with the learning of sex roles. Among books listed in this category, significant examples shed light on subversion of role models upheld by parents, schools and adults in the society. The books of Hong Kong children's literature are chosen from two of the big children's books publishers, Sunbeam Publications and Holdery Publishing Enterprises. Samples for study are based on the same criteria as the English texts; therefore, "stories about the child's growing up" with an age range from 8-12 will be my main focus. Picture books and comic strips are omitted from the current study because my examination of texts is directed to an appreciation of literature and a review of compositional elements including style, plot, setting and in particular, subversive character.

The present study investigates in depth the issues of subversion narrated in the selected English and Hong Kong children's texts. Comparisons and contrasts reveal how authors in different social contexts deal with the same theme. As shown in Rona Smith's research on American children's fiction, the qualitative approach adopted in the present

study reflects that the representation of male and female characters is also largely determined by the text as a whole. In a quantitative approach, the mere counting of items' occurrences and the analyses or inferences drawn from the collected data may yield a less resourceful insight owing to the lack of critical analysis. Based on a qualitative research device, this study elicits and interprets a literary work by putting its "total compositional context at the forefront of consciousness" (Vandergrift 26).

This research is divided into six chapters, two of which are devoted to the introduction and the study of historical background. Chapter two is divided into three sections to deal with the evolution of Western and Hong Kong children's literature. Chapters three to five examine literary texts to uncover incidences related to children's subversion of gender roles imposed upon them by parents, teachers and adults in general. In addition, Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of carnival and his notion of laughter are used to illustrate the dismantling power released from the humorous episodes of subversion. Finally, chapter six will offer a conclusion to sum up the various examples used for the discussion of subversion.



有幸有不幸 POOR CHILDREN HAVE NO RIGHT FOR SCHOOLING

家貧的兒童，隔著鐵欄淒慕小朋友讀書樂趣，今天每人都有進入學校受教育的機會，你有否荒廢學業呢?

Whimsical Garden: A Short Visit to the Realm of Children's Literature in the West

There is a garden in every childhood, an enchanted place where colours are brighter, the air softer, and the morning more fragrant than ever again.

Elizabeth Lawrence (1910-1985)

Thus grew the land of Wonderland:
Thus slowly, one by one,
Its quaint events were hammered out-
And now the tale is done,
And home we steer, a merry crew,
Beneath the setting sun.

Lewis Carroll, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

Though stumbling along the way, writers of children's literature have finally arrived at the "wonderland" and unlocked the door of fantasy. Loaded with the treasure of love and joy, Lewis Carroll in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland surprises us with his ingenious language and imaginative plot without being didactic:

> For the first time, children's stories were sheer fun and wit, without the moralizing element that Victorian writers so often felt compelled to include. (Carroll 2)

With the emergence of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, the year 1865 was perhaps one of the landmarks of children's literature in the West. Writers like William Roscoe (1753-1831) and Lewis Carroll (1832-1898) started their early efforts to entertain children with pleasurable experience immersed in their fictional worlds. From then on, books are just like friends to children, offering both comfort and relief at the same time to the child readers. Lillian Smith in The Unreluctant Years: A Critical Approach to Children's Literature, while justifying the possibility that children are reluctant to part with books of their own choice, has deliberately quoted a couplet from the New England

Primer of the eighteenth century: "My book and heart / Shall never part" (2). The couplet is juxtaposed with a picture of a child reading and emphasizes the mesmerizing enchantment of books for children, "a magic that enchants the children who reads them as the tune of the Pied Piper lured the children of the old Hamelin" (2).

Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution around 1760, the far-reaching effect of industrialization spread throughout the West and affected the growth of children from the eighteenth century onwards. Little children were found in factories, coal mines and discovered dead in the sooty chimneys. Romantic poet William Blake (1757-1827) composed poems about the little chimney sweepers and their wishes, satirically reflecting the harsh lives of children in his time. Take the poems "The Chimney Sweeper" in "Songs of Innocence and Experience" as examples. In both works, Blake stridently sanctions the economic and social injustice suffered by the chimney-sweep: "They clothed me in the clothes of death, / And taught me to sing the notes of woe (Norton 39). Charles Dickens (1812-1870) in his novels mirrors the grim social milieu of the early Victorian period and brings forth the pervasive horror of child abuse, poverty and mental deprivation of the young[1]. In Oliver Twist, he ironically comments on the predicament of the piteous child Oliver:

---

[1] One can point out effortlessly "two of the greatest novelists of the nineteenth century, Dickens and Dostoyevsky, in some sense never really wrote about anything other than insulted and injured children" (Plotz 2). To compile a list of children's death requires less skill than a cursory look at their works, and you will have "Dickens's Nell and Jo and Paul Dombey, [or] Dostoyevsky's Ilya". Judith Plotz quotes for support from Roy Strong, an art historian, that "the destruction of innocence, especially innocence personified by a child, was a veritable Victorian 'theme and obsession'" (2).

> Although I am not disposed to maintain that the being born in a workhouse, is in itself the most fortunate and enviable circumstance that can possibly befall a human being, I do mean to say that in this particular instance, it was the best thing for Oliver Twist that could by possibility have occurred. (Dickens 17)

Having barely enough to eat was the immediate problem of children in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; the dream of going to school was definitely a luxury to most of the unfortunate. A sympathetic heart for the young sufferers in factories obliged Dickens to create works such as A Christmas Carol, The Seven Poor Travelers and Magic Fish-bone (Ye 63) to soothe the vulnerable souls. Up to this day, A Christmas Carol is still a popular Christmas present chosen by adults for their children. A selection of good children's stories does not only help children learn to read, but it also serves the purposes to delight and amuse, hence prompting the development of positive and optimistic attitudes toward life.

Literary texts provide an alternative means to toys and games for the entertainment of a child and the accessible merits of pleasure and entertainment in the 19th and the 20th centuries children's literature have stimulated the imaginations of children and initiated "[t]heir search for an Arcadia, a Good place, a Secret Garden"[2]

---

[2] Edward Lear in his Book of Nonsense (1846) constantly alludes to a mysterious and unknown "Good Place" where he can obtain a permanent refuge from the existing troubles and the imminent danger. His idea of such a good place is in every sense different from that upheld by the religious writers for children

(Carpenter 13). Although nowadays many children in the West are materially well-prepared, they are still in need of stimulating ingredients to nourish their psychological and mental lives which can never be fully satisfied by playthings alone. Children require love and care from their parents but some of them have mistakenly interpreted the expression of love as the lavishing of toys and money. Or even if they have the right concept, they are still pressured by the compression of time--an abstracted entity which is claimed to be "lacking" by almost all modern people--and absurdly opt for the form of materialistic substitutes to compensate for their negligence of their children. Sheila A. Egoff in her discussion on children's literature, Thursday's Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children's Literature, has drawn our attention to the social phenomenon of "latch-key children"[3] as well as the general impact of modern lives confronted by our youngsters:

> It is of considerable significance that adolescents had been steadily assuming more and more of the attributes, prerequisites, and problems of their elders. Like adults, teenagers now had money, cars, and jobs

---

like John Bunyan or Mrs Sherwood. Lear's motive for seeking fun and happiness for children is so strong that he has denounced the conventional notion of "hellfire teaching" (Carpenter 13) in children's literature and created an enchanted world where there is always a possibility of escaping from the real world. *Arcadia*, indeed, is a fantastic world that can be reached by your imagination as you may please.

[3] Owing to the unwholesome disruption of family lives during the Second World War, the social problem of "latch-key children" emerged. The term "latch-key children" was used to "describe those children who had to let themselves in to empty houses or apartments because father was at war and mother was working in a munitions factory" (Egoff 12).

> together with drugs, liquor, sex, and the assorted difficulties arising therefrom. (Egoff 12)

Children nowadays do not seem to have fewer worries than children in the past. It is no wonder that educators, while brandishing the banner of modern psychology, claim that "children too [have] fears and anxieties, suppressions and repressions as [do] their older counterparts" (Egoff 13).

According to the remark of Egoff, the term "latch-key children" disappeared in the 1960s not because of any improvement in the situation but actually the cases of neglected children were "too ubiquitous to warrant a special name." The ascending number of "latch-key children", by and large, was an outcome of "the increasing incidence of one-parent families and mothers who worked for necessity or fulfillment" (Egoff 12). Nina Bawden in Carrie's War, a flashback of Carrie's childhood, describes how separation from parents affects the growth of the child. During the war between England and Germany, Carrie and her brother Nick are separated from their parents in their billets, for their father is a navy officer and their mother is an ambulance driver in the air raids. Very soon in a forgetful mood engendered in a new environment, the image of their affectionate mother fades away:

> Like their father, and Milly their help, who was working in a munitions factory, and Bongo their dog (their mother hadn't said what had happened to him) she belonged somewhere else. (Bawden 35)

Carrie does not receive proper care from her parents, so do many other children during the war. Unfortunately, Carrie's children suffer the same fate as their mother because in the present day, Carrie is a single parent. Another example can be found in Anne Fine's Flour Babies, in which the depiction of Simon Martin's single-parent family also captures a not unusual feature of modern days. The withdrawal of a father's love exhibits its palpable symptom in Simon, explaining why long "hours of Simon's childhood had been spent working out how his father would come back" (Fine 51). In the case that a child has both parents, they may also be too busy with their own businesses for the sustenance of modern lives and at the expense of full-time commitment to their child. The state of childhood with its concomitant pleasure and pain universally exists, disregarding the dimensions of time and space, as well as the open acknowledgment of a particular culture. Literature, possessing an immense value of universality, brings our next generation to the consolation of the "Secret Garden"[4] where they can all enjoy fantasy in a timeless rhythm.

To the utmost dismay of contemporary readers, not much fantasy could be found among books written specifically for children before the nineteenth century[5] to enliven

---

[4] Frances Hodgson Burnett's children's classic, The Secret Garden, provides an evergreen enjoyment to contemporary children as in the past. Far from being an escapist narrative, this book belongs to the genre of high fantasy and creates its own world with an "uncondescending playfulness" (Egoff 27). The sense of playfulness is serious enough to offer "milk for the soul" and lighthearted enough to supply "food for the imagination" (Egoff 27).

[5] Dennis Butts, chairman of the Children's Books History Society, offers us the information that children's literature in printed form already existed in the eighteenth century; yet favourable works of pure delight and

their lives or for them to have a hearty laugh. If books were published for children, they were fervently instructional instead of entertaining:

> "Instruction" predominated over "Amusement", to use the terminology favoured by the first English booksellers for children, who began business in the mid-eighteenth century. The greater number of children's books published in England between the 1740s and the 1820s were sternly moral, using simple stories to convey whatever ethical message was then in fashion. . . (Carpenter 2)

Accordingly, children's literature is a sharp weapon in disclosing the mercantile values and interests of a society at a certain stage owing to its power of reflection. Little Alice in Carroll's work displays a typical choice of works read by middle-class children in the early nineteenth century and children are required to beware of the importance of observing instructional rules:

> . . . she [Alice] had read several stories about children who had got burnt, and eaten up by wild beasts and other unpleasant things, all because they would not remember the simple rules their friends had taught them: such as, that a red-hot poker will burn you if you hold it too long; and that if you cut your finger very deeply with a knife, it usually bleeds. . . (Carroll 18)

---

pleasure matured in the nineteenth century and gradually occupied the open grassland where writers' imaginations could run wild.

Terribly upset by so many rules and restraints, Dickens had delivered a hard blow to the utilitarianism and the unnaturalness of fact-cramming education in Hard Times (1854). Changes in children's literature and education were bound to occur with the revolutionary proposals of educational reform by the second half of the nineteenth century. By then, writers such as Lewis Carroll, Carol Collodi (1826-90), Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-1894), Lyman Frank Baum (1856-1919) and many more came to join the scene. The panorama was both exciting and inspiring—one might discover names such as Louisa M. Alcott, Mark Twain, Lawrence Housman, Edith Nesbit and Rudyard Kipling being writers of the latter part of the nineteenth century. These are names that still live among our children and us nowadays (Aiken 1).

In response to the new perspectives of childhood advocated by Blake, Wordsworth, and Dickens[6] in stark contrast to the Medieval view of children as miniature adults[7], more and more books were especially designed, without exhortation,

---

[6] For details, see "Songs of Innocence and Experience" by William Blake; "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" or "The Prelude" by William Wordsworth; the collection of novels by Charles Dickens. The poems of Wordsworth, indeed, depart from the old view of children and glorify the state of childhood in an unprecedented way:

> When Wordsworth published his "Ode: Intimations of Immortality" in 1807 he was issuing a call to revolution against the view of children which had persisted throughout the eighteenth century, a view which had dominated both education and the writing of children's books. (Carpenter 7).

[7] In the Middle Ages, as Philippe Aries points out in Centuries of Childhood, "childhood was not valued as a separate, unique identity" (Egoff 3). This perspective of childhood persisted until the eighteenth century and was reinforced by philosophers like John Locke and Rousseau. Humphrey Carpenter in Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature makes the following remark:

> To the typical writer of the Enlightenment, a child was simply a miniature adult, a chrysalis from which a fully rational and moral being would duly emerge, providing parents and educators did their job properly. (7)

to cater for the needs of children in the nineteenth century. In his discussion of children's literature in the eighteenth century, Geoffrey Summerfield divulges to his reader that both children's literature and the concept of childhood are rather "recent invention[s]" in western culture, dawning "at the stage of inventing the wheel" (xi). Maria Nikolajeva also discloses a similar fact in her edition of Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature, hence reinforcing the view expressed by Summerfield with an equally disappointed tone:

> When the first book overtly written and published for children appeared, adult literature had already existed as an established literary system for many centuries. Whereas mainstream literature had evolved over several millennia, children's literature developed over only three to four hundred years, and in some countries over a considerably shorter time. (x)

Not surprisingly, children's literature was not perceived as a genre in English literature until the middle of the eighteenth century. The grim fact was, before the seventeenth century, children's books written with an ostensible purpose to evoke "spontaneous pleasure"[8] (Darton 1) simply did not exist in England. Besides Harvey Darton, Zohar

---

Revealing the same discovery, editors Iona and Peter Opie in the preface to The Oxford Book of Children's Verse suggest that the reason for scanty nursery rhymes before the eighteenth century is understandable because:

> [u]ntil the middle of the eighteenth century children were seldom regarded as they are today, as different creatures from the rest of us, requiring preferential treatment, a special dietary, and a separate literature. (viii)

[8] Harvey Darton in Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life discusses the definition of "children's books", for whom the generic term refers to works written specifically for child readers without

Shavit also discusses the same issue in her article on "The Historical Model of the Development of Children's Literature", in which she has recorded the result of her study: prior "to the seventeenth century, few books were produced specifically for children.... Children who knew how to read would have shared adult literature" (29).

Nowadays, very few writers are so committed to overt didacticism as Mary Martha Sherwood (1775-1851) or Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849). Both writers are best remembered by their impressive horror portrayed in their works; say in The History of the Fairchild Family (1818-47), Sherwood narrates a dreadful scene "in which Mr Fairchild takes his children to view a fratricide's corpse on a gibbet as a warning to those who quarrel with their siblings" (Mark x). This sort of didacticism burdens the already slow-progressed development of children's literature and stifles the breath of children. Later on, the emergence of new printing technology, together with the Education Act in 1870 and the introduction of compulsory education in 1880 (Reynolds xvi; 5) propelled the production of juvenile fiction on a large scale[9].

---

an overt aim to teach or moralize. Works which are purposely created to provide children "spontaneous pleasure" when reading serve as a broad description for children's books, thus excluding "all schoolbooks, all purely moral or didactic treatises, all reflective or adult-minded descriptions of child-life, and almost all alphabets, primers, and spelling-books" (1).

[9] See also the article by Zohar Shavit. Shavit elucidates why the children's book is a natural outcome of the new educational system:

> Once a new understanding of the child and of childhood emerged into societal consciousness (in a long and enigmatic process), a new and previously unknown demand for books exclusively produced for children appeared on the cultural scene. Until then children, who were educated in the framework of the apprenticeship system, did not need books in their educational process. As a new concept of education--the school system— replaced the apprenticeship system, books became part of the educational system for the first time and an indispensable vehicle for achieving its goals. (Shavit 29)

Publishing companies soon realized the potentiality of the markets opening for children's books, hence deluging bookstores with products of their commercial decisions which then determine the characteristics of children's books at any one time. Publishing companies are part of the "anomalies"—so called by Jan Mark because their existence is an unnatural hindrance to free imagination—confronted by almost all writers except those who decide to pay for their own fees of publication, just like John Newbery (1713-1767), himself a bookseller. Writers working under the auspices of publishers need to "pass the scrutiny of many adults" (Mark x) like parents, reviewers or teachers before their products can reach their intended audience. In the article "Retailing Gender: Adolescent Book Clubs in Australian Schools", Dianne Cooper discusses at length how publishing firms affect the publishing industry and the predominant texts for boys and girls[10]. She reveals how "mass exchange for profit" (11) determines the operation of the marketing practices, thus shedding light on the lucrative target of most multinational publishers who are convinced of the fact that:

> Reading and literary choice cannot be divorced from the culture, politics and economics of the industry of publishing. . . . It is according to publishers' policies, ideologies and economic practices that certain books are published and promoted and others are rejected. In most instances a

[10] Cooper in her discussion leaves out the biggest profiteer and the most effective censor, i. e. the bookstore.

book's potential to return quick profits, rather than literary merit *per se*, ensures publication, marketing expenditure and wide distribution. (10)

According to Cooper, a guaranteed sale usually obliges publishers to devise tactics to cater for the "real consumers"—"those who select educational texts on behalf on students—teachers, principals, curriculum developers and state department personnel" (11). In other words, texts published are mostly adults' choices. Situated in an environment where prolonged manipulation of reading choices from adults is inevitable, children are slighted as "passive receivers of knowledge" (11) or puppets that demonstrate "the ideological categories of the economic and social system into which the child readers are being socialized so closely" (Cooper 12).

Innovations in printing reduce the cost of publication and indirectly facilitate children's writers to create in a cheaper yet appealing packaging. Before the reading of a story, strikingly colourful designs and drawings are fundamental constituents attractive to children in the first instance, just like a blade of grass which strikes one's attention in a desert. Alice in her "adventures" has unreservedly depreciated the book read by her sister which has "no pictures or conversations". Alice is disgruntled with a plain book and would rather have nothing to do than be dulled by an unattractive book. Her frank nature allows her to make such a comment: "and what is the use of a book," thought Alice, "without pictures or conversation"[11] (Carroll 11). Throughout the nineteenth

[11] Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is vivified by the enchanting pictures of John Tenniel, a children's book illustrator in the golden age, who has successfully captivated the souls of millions of children.

century, many sub-genres of children's literature including the adventure story, the school story, the family story, the attempted fantasy up to the unbridled surrealism emerged with a concern with children's sense of wonder and articulated the reformed attitudes of childhood which might in turn govern the rules of the narrative pattern[12]. Children's literature in the middle of the nineteenth century, underwent a remarkable period of prosperity and deserved to be labeled as "The Golden Age" (Mark vix; Egoff 7).

The twentieth century began with the convention of amusement inherited from the nineteenth century, thus leading toward a sophisticated approach to the betterment of children's literature. Brilliant styles together with cheerful examinations of childhood and adulthood were presented to readers in J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan (1911), Frances Hodgson Burnett's The Secret Garden (1911) or Kenneth Grahame's The Wind in the Willows (1908). The figures of children in the above-mentioned works were, as Sheila A. Egoff suggests, advocators and preservers of childhood; yet:

---

[12] Dennis Butts suggests in the introduction to Stories and Society: Children's Literature in its Social Context that the evolution of various sub-genres in children's literature corresponds to social or historical developments. One example can be taken from the trend of writing school story, which is "an expression not only of changing attitudes towards childhood and adolescence, and the spread of education in general, but to the development of the reformed public (i. e. private) schools in England from the middle of the nineteenth century" (Butts xi). According to Butts, "the changing context may have affected the form" as many would agree with the claim that literature does not exist in a vacuum. Although consecrating "literature as a straightforward response to social conditions is too deterministic and reductive" (Butts xiii), it is still essential to observe how different genres respond to the cultural, social or historical stimuli. Supporting a similar belief to that of Dennis Butts, Jan Mark, a recognizably distinguished children's writer, conveys an almost identical comment that "children's fiction has undergone a slowly liberating development, as attitudes to children are supposed to have done" (Mark xi).

> It was not that the children in these books wanted to evade maturity and responsibility; it was rather that childhood had its own special character and flavor, qualities that could not be given up without a sense of loss. Childhood was to be prolonged as long as possible. (Egoff 7)

Barrie blares out, in notes of glee, the ideal state of childhood in Peter Pan; his creation, Peter, well exemplifies the reverie of remaining forever as "a little boy and to have fun" (Barrie 42). Striking the same chord as Wordsworth[13], the melody ringing "children are gay and innocent and heartless" (Barrie 242) not only invokes an archetypal image of childhood, but also invites generations of readers to participate in the mischievous hunt for a secret garden/Neverland, thus defiantly rebelling against adults' power and control. "Of all delectable islands the Neverland is the snuggest and most compact" (Barrie 14); such is the place where Peter Pan and the children following him enjoy their lives. In Peter Pan, Neverland is a place that rejects adults because "they are no longer gay and innocent and heartless. It is only the gay and innocent and heartless who can fly" (Barrie 236) in response to the call from Peter.

Also releasing children from the shackles of adults, The Secret Garden lets the little ones wander hither and thither, sowing the seeds of new lives through the means of restoring the neglected locked-up garden:

---

[13] In the novel Peter Pan, the adults are not empowered to enter the fairyland of Peter Pan's possession, for an adult has lost the blessings of a child. In the Wordsworthian tradition, "childhood is Nature-in-Man, and the child's is the most representative, most creatively unifying human kind" (Plotz 6).

> The seeds Dickon and Mary had planted grew as if fairies had tended them. Satiny poppies of all tints danced in the breeze by the score, gaily defying flowers which had lived in the garden for years, ... And the roses--the roses! Rising out of the grass, tangled round the sun-dial, wreathing the tree-trunks, and hanging from their branches, climbing up the walls and spreading over them with long garlands falling in cascades--they came alive day by day, hour and hour. (Burnett 236)

What an amazing life fostered by Mary and Dickon! The "magic" referred to by the children in the book represents hope along with the capacity to transform, and is indeed the unique attribute possessed by the young for the creation of a better new world. Following the qualities designated to the Child by the Romantics, children are nature personified: as "Nature's own creature—a being of growth and change in a universe of change, the child is the goal as well as the source of the adult" (Plotz 7). The two protagonists, Mary and Colin, with the help of the "magic", undergo various hardships to reach the final blissful state, evoking the very special charm of the "rainbow effect"--envisioning laughter shining through tears.

Modern fantasies such as Peter Pan, The Secret Garden or The Wind in the Willows are ostensibly devoted to children with reflections on the triumph of the bright side, things that are optimistic and accompanied with beauty. Ever since writers come

to a rough consensus of writing for children at their presence[14], children can then immerse themselves contentedly in a flood of delight, with the least interruption from the adults' world as possible. The swinging development of children's literature as such, clambered another "high plateau" by the end of the 1950s and lingered into the 1960s with the achievement of the "Second Golden Age" (Hollindale and Sutherland 256; Egoff 10) in the history of children's literature, hence founding the "heyday for fantasy books" (Hollindale and Sutherland 273) in the West.

During the period of the "Second Golden Age" of children's literature, new blood not only showed their interest in creating for children, but they also contributed substantially to this literary field. With indefatigable zest and energy, Lucy Boston, Philippa Pearce, Rosemary Sutcliff, Joan Aiken, and Alan Garner etc. practised their artistic license with the manifesto that

> Literature meant enrichment, both in the sense of giving pleasure and of broadening experience and developing taste. It could be light and even frivolous; the essential point was that, whatever its type, quality had to be present. (Egoff 10)

---

[14] Here, the adverbial phrase "at their presence" does not mean that a children's work must have a child be its protagonist or narrator. Children's writers come to their final conclusion that it is essential for them to dedicate their works specifically to children without trying to placate adults. Unless they have such a determination to do so, "the work will be likely to waver and vacillate, to fall between two styles, or two stools" (Aiken 3). Joan Aiken's advice for children's writers has mentioned the defect of ambiguities in the purpose of writing:

> If you try to write for children, but hope that adults will be reading the book too, an element of archness or insincerity is almost certain to creep into your style. (Aiken 3)

While the upholding of literary quality constituted the common ground among writers in this period, they had, at the same time, carefully shunned the interpolation of didacticism "as both irrelevant and insulting" (Egoff 10). This sort of attitude in twentieth-century children's literature lasted but two decades. In the 1970s, the glint of the "Golden Age" tarnished because of a strain of new blood as well as the emergence of "problem novels" (Hollindale and Sutherland 280; 293; Egoff 145), a dominant influence exercised and exported by the Americans to the rest of the world (Egoff 14). The major premise in the writing of children's literature is to treat the works as literature. Yet a slack in this belief caused the demise of the "Golden Age":

> By the end of the sixties, children's literature had moved from precept to pleasure to a state perilously close to schizophrenia caught between social turmoil and the legitimate claims of experimentation and development. The basic premise of children's literature as writing for children intended to be read as literature and not only for information and guidance appeared to be under attack. (Egoff 15)

The occurrence of the "problem novels"[15] originated from a good concern for children's adaptability in the world, for as time progressed in the twentieth century, more

---

However, the idea that writers should have children in mind during their creation does not necessarily preclude adults from enjoying children's literature.

[15] For a clear understanding of things dealt with in the "problem novels", a look at Egoff's Thursday's Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children's Literature or Peter Hunt's Children's Literature: An Illustrated History would certainly prove helpful indeed. In Hunt's work, Tony Watkins and Zena Sutherland raise the question which critics should think about:

complicated issues happening in the society had really made some writers worry about the naivety of their younger generation. Such a kind of anxiety lured some of the writers to add in the realistic elements from their daily life, and this type of writing once posed a great challenge to stories with the merit of pure delight. The term "problem novel" serves as a good pun in itself. On the one hand, it refers to novels that deal with social problems while on the other hand, it does a self-appraisal for the genre itself: its existence is problematic and its value debatable. Sheila A. Egoff poses the dilemma of its existence in the following way:

> The same kind of ethical imperative was implied in these books as in those offerings of the more distant past: children need to be informed; the time is too short to let them reach their own conclusions or to move at their own speed . . . . The pressure to find subject matter of "social relevance" not only led to tedious repetition (almost carbon copies) but also to the loss of something that had formerly seemed the very essence of children's literature, the traditional literary values of imagination and style. . . . (Egoff 14)

Having but one look at the "problem novels", the swamping depiction of social issues such as divorce, sex, drugs, alcoholism and other taboos which are previously forbidden

---

whether the evaluation of children's books should be carried out according to purely literary criteria or whether social criteria, in particular the representation of gender and ethnicity, should be taken into account and, if so, to what extent. (Watkins and Sutherland 294)

have found their way into this genre, with their impact nullified because of their over repetition and the loss of traditional literary values. During the domination of the "problem novels", the regression in the development of children's literature does not defeat the hard work or budge the loyalty of our devotees like Ursula Le Guin, Philippa Pearce, or Mary Norton, who have "persisted in [their] triumphant expression of fine writing, enduring values, and original imaginative power" (Egoff 15).

Although writers are keen on liberating their art-form in twentieth century children's literature, their popularity is not possible without the influence of the publishing companies. The well-established publisher, Puffin Books[16], founded in 1941 under the imprint of Penguin (Hollindale and Sutherland 259; Ye 135), has systematically published children's stories for the welfare of the next generation in the post-war years and served as a catalyst in bringing together the resourcefulness of various children's writers in its Puffin Classics and Modern Classics.

The efforts of writers, publishing firms and bookstores jointly contribute to the development and growth of children's literature. The technology of printing in the contemporary world enables fantasy, science fiction, problem novels etc. to prosper in the realm of children's literature just like buds, shrubs and saplings flourish in a garden. The emergence of different genres offers multifarious storybooks to our children, who

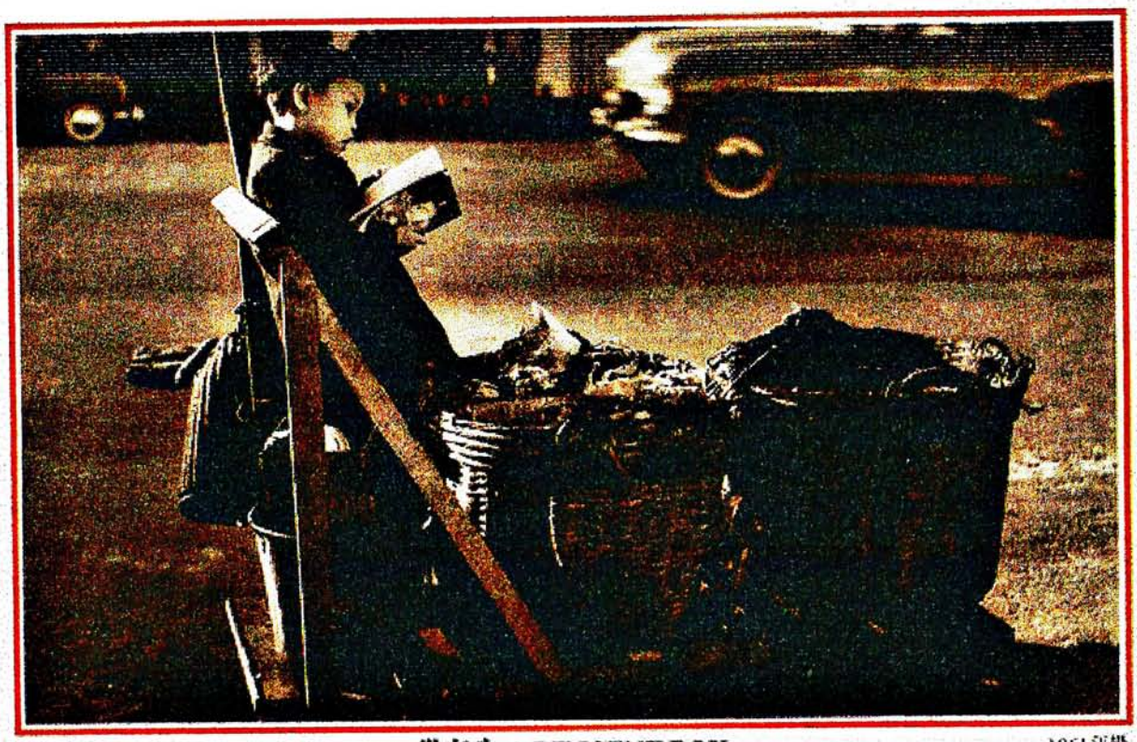
[16] This research focuses on the "growing up" stories collection (Age 8-12) from the Puffin edition.

have followed suit of their predecessors, go to books in search of security, imagination, expression of their inner voices or downright fun.

A garden is not for giving or taking.

A garden is for all.

Frances Hodgson Burnett (1849-1924)



勤有功 A DILIGENT BOY 1961年攝

小哥兒在幫媽媽看管垃圾車，也偷閒讀書。可能貧窮更令人珍惜讀書的機會吧!

Rejuvenated Roses: The Growth of Hong Kong Children's Literature and Its Tinge of Local Colors

There is no healing coolness like that of the petals of a rose.

Charlotte Gray (b. 1937)

The refreshing balm emitted from the whimsical garden hovers east and west, luring the child's mind with an aroma conjured up by a mixture of the blossoming flowers. Once the fragrance is inhaled, one can feel the soothing effect warming the heart; one is uplifted to a new life and an anticipation of comfort in the embrace of writers like He Zi何紫, Ah Lung阿濃, Dong Rui 東瑞, Sung Yee-shui Elaine宋詒瑞, Pang Jin-ying and her sister, Ming Zhu潘金英和潘明珠 (Zhou周136-7)[1]. They are the gardeners, the devotees of children's felicity, who like their Western counterparts, plough with love and a sense of empathy with the child readers. Although children's writers in Hong Kong start to cultivate their plots of soil at a relatively later stage than in the West, a lag of two hundred years or more, their progress is by no means far behind[2]. On the contrary, they have harvested the early-maturing yet equally high-yielding crops together with their Western neighbors.

Long before Hong Kong existed as a colony, local writers had not yet perceived the need to create anything for children in particular. The situation was the exact

---

[1] See Appendix 1 for their biographies.

[2] In volume two of Zhou Mi-mi's 周蜜蜜study of children's literature (60s-90s), Ah Lung provides details about the formation of Hong Kong Children's Arts Society, in which committee members include himself and other children's writers like He Zi, Pan Jin-ying and her sister. The objectives of the society direct to a provision of "spiritual nourishment" 精神食糧for our little readers, warming their hearts with the beauty of language and the poetic rhythm of words. Ah Lung evaluates those newly-joined writers of their group with optimism: Sung Yee-shui executes her writing with an exquisitely fresh style while Dong Rui adds the spice of scientific fantasy to his stories. The refreshing appearance of those writers comes just in time to give wings to imaginative works for children.

opposite to what happens nowadays, when programs on television mention the importance of children's literature and new young local writers attempt to have their creation published for our children. Children of Hong Kong in the older days, while being a part of China, shared books that children in the Mainland China read. Parents or storytellers in the street would also narrate tales and fables from the deep well of imagination belonging to our country, before written forms of the stories were adopted. Prior to the rule of the British Government, children's literature circulating among local children was mostly imported from China and Taiwan or translated from the Western tales by mainland publishers.

The emergence of indigenous children's literature did not come to the forefront all of a sudden with a change in the government. Although under the British rule, the people in Hong Kong and China were still culturally linked. The sharing of a common language also contributed to an extension of Chinese children's books tradition into the HK literary system (Zhou 175). According to information gathered from the scanty early materials about the HK literary system[3], Zhou Mi-mi discovers that the sprouting stage of HK children's literature should be after the late 20s, similar to the conclusion made in Siu Sze's 小思 research on the adult's literary system (Zhou, 20s-50s, 4). In the 30s, HK children's literature was still heavily indebted to the mainlanders. During the span from 1937 to 1945, large numbers of Chinese scholars flooded into HK to take shelter when the war against the Japanese invasion broke out. Writers like Chen Bo-chui陳伯吹, Feng Zi-kai豐子愷, Si Ma

---

[3] The "literary system" mentioned in this chapter refers to the organized record of literary

Wen Sen司馬文森, Huang Ku-liu黃谷柳 and many others committed themselves to local activities related to children's writings. The novel Hsia-chiu Chuan《蝦球傳》by Huang was well received among the young readers in Hong Kong during the War of Resistance against Japan 抗日戰爭 (Zhou, 20s-50s, 64). The book is "perhaps one of the best known in this period of Hong Kong literature," Prof Wong Wai-leung黃維樑 argues (Wong 8). Owing to an inseparable connection with the mainland culture, before the 40s, a full-fledged system of HK children's literature still had not been formed.

The development of localized children's literature only came as a result when the social, economic, educational and political conditions in HK began to diverge extensively from China at a later stage of the British rule. Also, local schools and writers were beginning to become disgruntled with the complicated issues of politics involved in children's literature imported from China. If one had a look at the contemporary history of China, one could easily discover the cultural and political upheavals happening in this country over the 20th century: the May Fourth Movement, the Sino-Japanese war, the internal war between the Communist Party and the Nationalist as well as the Cultural Revolution. The fostering of Chinese children's literature in such a suffocating environment was inevitably weakened and was often rendered into a tool of political propaganda, burdening it with a motley of political issues such as class struggle and revolution. The child characters in these storybooks were often depicted as heroes in revolution, supporting the Communist

---

development.

Party or sacrificing themselves in wars. Children's books with the themes of political and social changes failed to appeal to Hong Kong children; local writers then began their works in response to the strong needs from our children and teachers. Indigenous children's writers whom we admire throughout the latter half of the 20thC mostly started to sow the literary field in the 40s and 50s, bringing with them a refreshing breeze across the pasture of children's literature in Hong Kong.

Over the past one hundred and fifty years of British rule, no one could anticipate the gigantic changes in the economic and financial developments of Hong Kong, not to mention its culture and literature. This short period of time allowed a tremendous transformation in Hong Kong children's literature[4], which had encapsulated a lively silhouette of the Western children's literary system. Beginning as an unnoticed literary field, HK children's literature then moved on to its sprouting stage and the *two* periods of its "golden age" (Zhou, 60s-90s, 176-181). Although there is a setback in recent times owing to challenges from electronic media and Japanese comics, children's writers are not defeated but return with more works for their little readers.

The same stages[5] of historical development in both Hong Kong and Western children's literature, in the opinion of Shavit, are no mere coincidence, but a universally applicable pattern that can "[transcend] national boundaries and even

---

[4] Zhou Mi-mi 周蜜蜜 in her preface to the Exploration of Children's Literature in Hong Kong (20s-50s) 香江兒夢話百年 states at the outset that local development of children's literature emerges out of a void. However, a unique pattern of historical development comes into view after experiencing various stages of shaping and re-shaping.

[5] The same stages refer to the initial sprouting stage, the two periods of "golden age" and the stage when the electronic media threatens the survival of children's literature.

temporal ones. Regardless of when and where a system of children's literature began to develop, whether its emergence took place a hundred or even two hundred years later, all systems of children's literature known to us, without exception, pass through the same stages of development. Moreover, the same cultural factors and institutions are involved in their creation" (Shavit 27-8). Kerin Lesnik-Oberstein suggests to us one conspicuous factor that prompted the rise of Western children's literature. In Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child, she argues that children's literature is an outgrowth of the progressive idea of a child[6]. Roderick McGillis is prompt in response to this observation; he thinks that "[a]nyone who writes about children's literature must be acutely aware of the subject's unique demands and its distinctive position within our culture (ix)". Given a similar proportion of nutrients and attention, one can find similarly charming, perceptive and inspiring children's literature in the West and in Hong Kong. Given enough encouragement from people who favor HK children's literature[7], local writers can always sprinkle the subversive elements among a sweep of pixie dust[8] gathered in the realm of fantasy and mystery.

The first sprinkle of pixie dust in the field of HK children's literature was gathered by Ms Annie Wong Hing-wan黃慶雲, nicknamed *Sister Wan*雲姊姊(Lam 15). In June 1941, Wong Hing-wan (1920-) published the first children's magazine

---

[6] The recognition that children are different from adults and that children deserve special care urges some writers to create a special type of literature to accommodate children's need, hence the emergence of "children's literature".

[7] Don Rui comments in his article that the creation of quality children's literature and children's arts emerges out of people's concern for it and its promotion. To draw the market's attention to children's literature and to give this genre a critical focus on its own, the most important factor depends on people's devotion (Dong 62).

ever in the literary history of Hong Kong. Under the auspices of Dr Tsang Chiu-sum曾昭森, Modern Children Biweekly《新兒童半月刊》 was put on the market, receiving ardent welcome and support from many scholars. Among them was Hui Tei-shan許地山, whose fairy tales "Fluorescent Lamp"《螢燈》 and "Lady of *Tao-jin*"《桃金娘》 were published in the magazine. "We should create our own fairy tales. . . . We should move along our own path," Hui encourages Annie Wong (Tse 126-7). According to He Zi, one of the important founders of HK children's literature, Sister Wan's Modern Children largely inspired his pursuit in the field. When Wong accounted for her creation of Modern Children, she openly expressed her devotion to children in her time, who were forever chubby angels, even though hardships of life in the 50s had given them an extra sense of precocity (21). Thus growing under the care of Wong was a magazine in rejection of inculcated morals. Wong always placed the interests of children in the foreground, so she let children be the owner of the magazine and she also provided an arena for children to discuss their views of life. Sister Wan did not teach but shared with children as her equal counterparts:

> Our magazine had many sections for children to exercise their minds and hands. "Article Gym" was comparatively more interesting among all sections. At the beginning, children composed their stories while editors did the corrections. Later on, both children and editors worked on the corrections together. The most thought-provoking part was the serials

---

[8] Pixies are like fairies but are more mischievous. They can be found in many children's stories.

which enabled children to speak and read for themselves. One paragraph was for one issue. In the next issue, a good continuing paragraph would be selected from what children had sent. Since children had plentiful imagination, the story would become more and more complicated. And we editors had turned ourselves into readers. (My translation) (Zhou, 20s-50s, 26-7)

我們雜誌裏有許多是讓孩子自己去動腦筋和動手的欄目。其中比較有趣的是文章健美院,起初是,孩子們作文,編輯部來修改,後來就發展到大家都來改。更耐人尋味的是連環故事,讓孩子們自己說,自己讀。每期一段,下一期就從孩子寄來的續稿中選一段好的登上去。這樣,故事就越發展越曲折,因為孩子們的想像力是豐富的。而我們這些編者也變成了讀者了。(周, 二十至五十年代, 26-7)

Having been influenced by Lu Xun's魯迅 appeal to "democratic education" in his articles "Save Our Children"救救孩子 and "Release Our Children"解放我們的孩子, Sister Wan believed that children's literature should help children voice their own opinions (Zhou, 20s-50s, 32). She overturned the traditional thinking that children were mini-adults and removed the heavy burdens of "should" and "shouldn't" ruthlessly laid down upon the little minds by the society. In Modern Children Biweekly, the "Letter Box of Sister Wan"雲姊姊信箱 encouraged children to reform the society with their ideals, hence subverting the seemingly unchangeable adults' world. Her belief that children are capable of changing the world is illustrated in her words that:

> We cannot treat children as unalterable animals with round heads and square toes. His round head is also susceptible to different kinds of thoughts coming from the outside world whereas his square toes will walk to a new path. For this reason, I have to keep on learning. New children, oh new children! I have to forever renew myself, so that I can progress along with you. (My translation) (Zhou, 20s-50s, 28)
>
> 我們不能把孩子看成是一成不變的圓顱方趾小動物。他的圓顱,也受外界影響而有各種想法,他的方趾,也是向新的路上邁進的。為了這，我就要不斷的學習，新兒童啊新兒童，我也要永遠的推陳出新,才能和你們一同前進了! (周, 二十至五十年代, 28)

As soaring contacts with Western countries brought in a new concept of childhood and a new idea of the child, concern with HK children's literature heightened gradually. The impact of a recognizable period of childhood provided reason to illumine how local children's literature took shape in the 50s.

Following the same track as Sister Wan, Lau Wai-king劉惠瓊 was another remarkable figure in children's minds during the 50s. The radio program "Sister Lau's Story Time"劉姐姐講故事 was aired daily and attracted many small listeners during the broadcasting period. Sister Wan later on turned her stories from oral versions into printed form, driving into the market her children's newspaper, Er Tong Pao《兒童報》 (Lo 37-8). Er Tong Pao survived a relatively long period despite its economic difficulties. The emergence of Er Tong Pao and its prolonged struggle in the commercial market was nonetheless an encouraging breakthrough to boost

further attempts in the field. The advent of Children's Daily《兒童日報》 on 17 September 1989 made fascinating reading in that time. A total amount of HK$10 million was invested in the promotion of the initial issue only; as one may discover, the large sum of input in Children's Daily was significant enough to testify to the commitment of Lee Tong-le李同樂 and Ng Chun-yin吳仲賢, the founders of the newspaper. Though the newspaper stopped publication in 1991, the miracle of reaching 100 thousand readers was indelibly a new footprint marked in the field of HK children's literature.

The 30s-50s marked the sprouting stage of Hong Kong children's literature with the endeavors of Sister Wan and Lau Wai-king, whose exuberance attracted young writers like He Zi and Ah Lung to try their hands at writing for children. In an interview with Qin Mu秦牧 conducted ten years ago, He Zi remarked that there was just "half" a person actively participating in the field of HK children's literature and this "half" person, not surprisingly, was He Zi himself (Dong 61)[9]. The formation of locally produced children's literature with a representation of local children matured in the 60s when a rudimentary team of workers gathered forces from the society. In 1962, Hong Kong City Hall Library was founded; following its successful formation, the Urban Council then established more libraries. In the same year, HK Caritas followed suit to set up community libraries in different districts. Very soon another organization, HK Children's Welfare Society, did its part as well in the promotion of

[9] Auntie Tong唐姨姨, a children's writer of the column "Children's World"兒童天地 published in Oversea Chinese Daily華僑日報, mentioned the same fact that during the 60s-70s, He Zi served as the only "half" children's writer who actually took up the task of creation. The others merely translated stories from the West or selected different types of jokes, games, or riddles for publication.

habitual reading among HK children. In the 60s-70s, large publishing firms such as Sun Ya Colorful Painting Company新雅七彩畫片公司 (founded in October 1961), later renamed Sun Ya Publications (HK) Ltd. 新雅文化事業有限公司, also played a major role in revivifying the publication of quality children's literature. With dynamic support and an avalanche of concern coming from all sides of the society, HK children's literature entered its first glorious period of flourishing growth.

If the 60s to the 70s was the first "golden age" of HK children's literature, the fruitful achievements obtained during the 70s to 80s should be more than enough for us to call it the second "golden age": a new generation of children's writers began their locally produced works; cross-cultural conferences on children's literature were convened; professional publishing firms introduced advanced printing equipment; more organizations joined in the promotion of children's arts and literature; the high standard of children's works was recognized with both local and overseas awards. In view of these glittering accomplishments, the impetus of He Zi was worth mentioning, especially his establishment of Sunbeam Publication and Hong Kong Children's Arts Society in 1981. In addition, He Zi was eager to organize activities in relation to the advancement of children's literature and open up opportunities for new writers. His strong sense of social consciousness impelled him to fashion his novels with local features and a rich favour of HK life. This motion, in turn, activated the creation of a new genre, "Hong Kong Children's Literature"香土兒童文學 (Zhou, 60s-90s, 53), which belonged exclusively to our own youngsters.

In order to offer a collection of works that was rooted in HK and could arouse

instant recognition among HK children, local writers like Kim Yi金依, Ah Lung, Xia Yi夏易, Yang Bi羊璧 and Hai Xin海辛 carefully placed the themes and settings of their works within indigenous cultural contexts. In 1986, Chen Bo-chui陳伯吹 awarded a Gardener Prize to Irene Yim's嚴吳嬋霞 story "A Tree Named Tang"《姓鄧的樹》. The story, first published in the September issue of Children Times《兒童時代》 magazine, scrutinizes the historical questions of our territory and our cultural identities (Yim 164). The author speaks in the voice of an old banyan, inviting little readers to identify with our own culture through a display of nostalgic longing for our past, our shared origin.

Another sharer of bedside-secrets, Ah Lung, was skilful in addressing topical and controversial issues regarding the society of Hong Kong. Ah Lung was often named together with He Zi owing to his incessant attempt to extend the field of local children's literature. His works "Dim Sum Collection" I, II and III 點心集一、二、三集 were put on the market and each had a circulation of around twenty to thirty thousand. In December 1988, "Dim Sum Collection I" released its fifteenth edition, becoming a much-told tale in the publishing industry. In an appraisal by a mainland scholar Tse Ming-sang謝明生, Ah Lung was said to possess a "colorful pen"彩筆 which could bring forth prominent local spirit in his works of art (Chen 425). A definite amount of social issues and realistic details of HK life were also seen from Ah Lung's writings. For instance, his narratives "The Best Gift"《最佳禮物》, "The First Recollection"《第一個記憶》, and "If I Were that Girl"《如果我是那女孩》 all cast an eye at our society's values and projections with a critical perspective. The

fragments of life described in Ah Lung's local stories mirrored a vivid picture of a dynamic HK, while at the same time, articulating the author's intricate feelings towards the territory.

The new genre of "HK Children's Literature" constituted a pronounced feature in the second "golden age" of local children's books publication. Besides, a team of children's workers was already on the list: Ah Lung, Sung Yee-shui, Lau So-Yee劉素儀, Pang Jin-ying, Chan Hua-ying陳華英, Jin Li-ming金力明, Irene Yim, Wong Tung-to, Zhou Mi-mi, Pang Ming-zhu, Auntie Tong. . . more than twenty names could be recalled. The team was the essential productive power working under the two big publishing companies, Sun Ya and Holdery獲益 (Dong 61). If there was stable growth in the industry, local writing for young people would be facing a better prospect. However, at the end of the century, electronic media, Japanese comics and even worse, the widened influence of local comics all posed threats to quality children's literature. Spectacular increases in readership of local comics boosted sales in the comics industry. The rise of the "Jade Empire"玉皇朝 by Wong Yuk-long黃玉郎 further attested to the solid status of the comics business in the local market. The best-sellers of Jademan Corporation, including Siu Lau Man《小流氓》 (Little Rascal), Lung Fu Moon《龍虎門》 (Dragons and Tiger Kids) and Chung Wah Ying Hung《中華英雄》 (Chinese Heroes), hit the market with an impressive turnover of HK$17.9 million for March 1990 (Choi 561). The great success of the comics business diminished the circulation of local children's literature. Pictures of violence, ghosts stories and sexual cartoons constituted the

major attraction of local comics, absorbing the attention of many blue-collar workers as well as secondary school students with an age range from 15-24, according to Choi Po-king's蔡寶琼 assumption (Choi 561-3). The worry expressed by Dong Rui towards the future direction of HK children's literature was reasonable, in the face of the adverse circumstances engendered from the domination of comics and commercial series.

In spite of the fact that comics reading had become a major trend among the young, local children's writers did not budge an inch to patronize readers with "stories of triads and brothels" (Choi 562). They remained steadfast in their belief that good writing was initiated from a "child's mind"童心 (Wong 15, Chen 416, Ming Pao Daily 31 Aug 97). Local children's writers had full confidence that indigenous children's literature could neither be replaced by comics nor annihilated by a deluge of multifarious entertainment (Zhou, 60s-90s, 165-6). At present, the operation of mainland children's literature is gradually evolving on a nationwide scale (People's Daily), and it is hoped that Hong Kong children's literature would follow suit in the future.

Discussions about local children's literature have never died down. More concerns are put on quality, though quantity continues to be the target of children's writers. A report in Ming Pao Daily, dated 31 August 1997, headlined "Projecting Children's Myth－Mourning Children's Literature" reinforces my argument that popular children's literature is always empathetic with children and it is also imbued with the air from an unbounded world. Local children's stories are still not immune to adults' moral standards and they sometimes underpin the importance of following

adults' instructions. A child is taught to fawn on grown-ups if (s)he wants to be rewarded. It may be true that stories with disguised lessons are effective to maintain the status quo and preserve the established social rules. However, the report sarcastically comments that the severe repression only transforms our next generation into a "tribe of pygmies"侏儒 or a "population of ants"蟻民 because they have become too small to voice their opinions. Another report in Hong Kong Daily News, 12 September 1997, indignantly decries the prescribed notions of right and wrong in local children's literature, which have manipulated a child reader by eliminating many possible choices normally available in one's life.

A blend of innovation, imagination and fantasy occupies the central position in children's stories, thus creating a make-believe world, which breaks from adults' conventional values, for our next generation. Nina Bawden, the writer of Carrie's War and several other famous children's books, has an experience which can serve as a reference to HK children's writers for their creation. Bawden has recorded her childhood memory of the dead pig episode[10] with the following remark on what children feel:

> Children don't always feel what adults expect them to feel, nor see what adults expect them to see. They inhabit the same world but they look at it differently. This is why they are so rewarding to write about, so *useful* to the novelist. Novelists have always used children as Henry James used his little heroine in What Masie Knew, to comment on the hypocrisies and

[10] The dead pig episode happened when Bawden's mother brought small Nina Bawden to welcome her father home from work. Bawden was four that year. The girl paid little attention to her father's

> follies of society. They move, as it were, in the undergrowth; they have their ears to the ground, and their eyes are unclouded. They are detached, attentive and sometimes quite cruel observers of what goes on in the adult world because, although it is their world too, their interests in it are basically quite different. A dead pig, to a four-year-old, can be more interesting than the father she has not seen for years and has almost forgotten. (Bawden 4)

The differences between writing adults' novels or children's works depend vastly upon the viewpoints adopted by writers, as Nina Bawden suggests throughout her article "A Dead Pig and My Father". Beyond and behind the boundaries laid down by the society, children's writers only find too much rather than too little to say:

> They mock current assumptions and express the imaginative, unconventional, noncommercial view of the world in its simplest and purest form. They appeal to the imaginative, questioning, rebellious child within all of us, renew our instinctive energy, and act as a force for change. (Lurie xi)

Those of us who welcome the joyous celebration of flowers in spring would also receive with intense delight such "a force for change" to a whole new world.

> People from a planet without flowers would think we must be mad with joy the whole time to have such things about us.
>
> Iris Murdoch (b.1919)

---

approaching ship. Instead, she was amazed at the dead pig floating in the sea.

習慣了 BABY "SISTER" 1959年攝

頑皮的弟弟，在背後「抱計」，身兼母職的姊姊已習慣了，所以能專心地看公仔書。

Magic Wand to the Future: Subversive Children's literature

Piper sit thee down and write
In a book that all may read
William Blake

Having visited the "whimsical garden" and witnessed the growth of "rejuvenated roses", one cannot help giving applause to the amazing acts performed by children's writers. The developments of both western and HK children's literature indicate a change of direction from instructional works to those that we may call subversive. The alteration is desirable among children, who prefer to read stories that can give them enormous opportunities to imagine, to hover between past and future and to wonder at the impossibility.

In William Blake's poem "Introduction to Songs of Innocence", an innocent child asks the piper to compose some stories for him. The image immediately evokes an interactive relationship between authors and children. Since children have an intuitive interest in reading stories, most of the time, adults create upon the request of children. Fortunately, not many children's writers are downright moralists like Mary Martha Sherwood (1775-1851) or Maria Edgeworth (1767-1849) (Mark x). In fact, children's writers arrayed in Jan Mark's The Oxford Book of Children's Stories are diverse as candies sold in a candy store. While some candies have good looks as well as good taste, some simply have good packaging, without the sort of marvelous flavor that will entice you whenever you pass by the store. Our beloved children's literature is like creamy chocolate, which gives out an irresistible rich smell of sweetness and teases us to taste it again and again. Writers who are sympathetic to children know what the little connoisseurs prefer and they often

produce works that have lasting flavor. They are also keen on experimenting with ideas that break away from the ennui of everyday life, just as Alison Lurie suggests in Don't Tell the Grown-ups: Subversive Children's Literature:

> Many other authors of juvenile classics, though not so openly unconventional as MacDonald or as strikingly divided in personality as Twain and Carroll, have had the ability to look at the world from below and note its less respectable aspects, just as little children playing on the floor can see the chewing gum stuck to the underside of polished mahogany tables and the hems of silk dresses held up with safety pins. The instinctive sympathy of such writers is often with the rebel, the defier of social laws. (Lurie 8)

Therefore, children's fiction that can be read afresh, in other words, works that are "durable", belongs to the craftsmanship of subversive children's writers like J. M. Barrie, Lewis Carroll, E. B. White, Beatrix Potter, Roald Dahl, He Zi, Ah Lung and many others.

The eternal appeal of stories hinges on the universal receptivity of vicarious experiences and the primeval needs of imagination and fantasy. Subversive children's writers try out new things with readers and comment on the world from the perspective of children. To take an example, let us consider Roald Dahl (1916-1990), the most popular British children's writer after Enid Blyton. In his original and inventive work Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Dahl describes the unforgettable adventure of Charlie inside the mysterious Mr Wonka's chocolate

factory. A reviewer for the Atlantic Monthly, Charlotte Jackson, is much amazed at the book's "magical nonsense and uproarious situations" (West 70). The main attraction of Dahl's story, however, does not simply come from the amusing plot; indeed the energetic and vulgar reaction against adults' foibles plays the greatest part.

In Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, the foolishness and irrationality of adults are made prominent when the faddish drive for the Golden Chocolate Ticket is in full swing:

> And now the whole country, indeed, the whole world, seemed suddenly to be caught up in a mad chocolate-buying spree, everybody searching frantically for those precious remaining tickets. *Fully grown women were seen going into sweet shops and buying ten Wonka bars at a time, then tearing off the wrappers on the spot and peering eagerly underneath for a glint of golden paper.* (My italics) (Dahl 38)

As if the crazy buying is not ridiculous enough, Dahl further tells us that:

> In one city, a famous gangster robbed a bank of a thousand pounds and spent the whole lot on Wonka bars that same afternoon. And when the police entered his house to arrest him, they found him sitting on the floor amidst mountains of chocolate, ripping off the wrappers with the blade of a long dagger. (Dahl 38)

The above two instances are not inadequate exaggerations used simply to create laughter. If we observe the way adults flood to the stock market, the way people

gamble unrepentantly or the means politicians use to win elections, we will not be surprised at Dahl's narration, but will surely agree with his realistic presentation of details.

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory unravels the insanity of grown-ups, who always believe that they are the incarnation of justice and the absolute authority on right and wrong. Dahl's story is revolutionary because, through depiction of many striking incidents, he lures people to interrogate anomalies in their immediate surroundings or to subvert the intellectual superiority of academics. In Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Dahl unabashedly makes fun of a scientist, Professor Foulbody, and debases the value of meaningless scientific inventions, say the machine which tells people if there is a Golden Ticket without opening the wrappers of chocolate bars. The name "Professor Foulbody" pokes fun at follies occurring in the intellectual authority and reveals the unpleasant existence of any quasi-academic world.

With a sharp insight into children's reactions and their inner lives, Dahl appeals to the instinctive righteousness of children, hence acting in stark contrast to the conviction that post-Lapsarian children are essentially evil. Dahl is keen on creating a "comic" world where the young/the poor will outwit the older generation/the powerful, as shown in his work Matilda. In the illustration of Elizabeth Hammill, Dahl is:

> The most widely-read contemporary children's author whose popularity stems, in part, from his ability to realize in fiction

> children's innermost dreams, and to offer subversive, gruesomely satisfying, sometimes comic solutions to their nightmares. His heroes tend to be underdogs--the poor, the bullied, the hunted, the orphans--whose lives are transformed by the fantastic, sometimes disconcerting events of the stories. (Hunt, An Introduction 20)

In short, Dahl speaks for the suppressed while showing genuine concern with the restoration of a restructured world, where the previously underprivileged, especially children, will be leaders. As a result, Peter Hunt's saying that Dahl "appears to be wholly on the side of anarchy" (Hunt, An Introduction 20) sounds partially true because Dahl has offered Charlie and the Chocolate Factory as well as Matilda alternative options to smooth down disrupted structure of the society. Although temporary periods of anarchy exist in Dahl's books after bouts of attack on the status quo, stability ensues from the establishment of new systems and orders. Dahl's stories have dynamic narrative and rhetorical styles[1], thus creating a great momentum in the transgression of existing values. Based on the premise that the innocent should be placed higher than the deceptive or the powerful, Dahl pierces the world with a "child's uncompromising gaze that recognizes the Emperor in his full nakedness" (Egoff, Stubbs, Ashley and Sutton 31).

In contrast, didactic children's fiction places children at the lowest stratum of the social hierarchy, addressing little readers from voices in heaven. In this type of story, authors only allow children to witness what they should see so as to legitimize

the dominant discourse in the society. Didactic moralizers write to civilize the young in accordance with the social code of the time at the expense of engaging plots; as Jan Mark maintains, "moral tales [are] directed at children in order to help them grow into acceptable adults" (xvii). Most of the time, didactic stories are produced in a formulaic way and round off with a severe punishment to a rebellious child or a reward for a compliant child. The ultimate aim of having such an ending is to constrain effectively a child's misbehavior, which if unrestrained usually leads to a disastrous outcome:

> But see the consequences of his giddiness and folly! His foot slipped; he fell under the loaded wagon; the wheel passed over one of his legs, and shattered it in the most shocking manner. (Mark xviii)

This excerpt from a story entitled "The Danger of the Streets" is an exemplary instructive tale produced in the nineteenth century Europe to warn children against impropriety. The story, when told to a child, undoubtedly makes a sensational impact on him. The tone of exhortation is not different from that of a sermon and the scary description undermines the audacity of a child to transgress the norm.

For contemporary Hong Kong children's literature, Chen Hua-ying's 陳華英 Troublesome Knight《茶煲勇士》 can also be labeled as didactic. Her book is a collection of stories composed with limited variations and moral endings. One of the tales "Fatty and Skinny" 《肥肥和瘦瘦》 concludes with a lesson that both obese and thin people can have their own advantages, thus altering our stances on the

---

[1] Peter Hunt in An Introduction to Children's Literature maintains that Roald Dahl's books are

physical appearance of a person. Another story, "The Frogs' Conference"《青蛙大會》 is an aphoristic narrative pouncing on tyranny. Chen undertakes a mission to create an instructional reading; acerbity can be found in her voice at times:

> The frogs don't know that besides "justice", there is "power" in this world. Sometimes, under the dominion of "power", "justice" will not exist at all. (My translation) (Chen 52)
>
> 青蛙們不曉得，這世界上除了公義之外，還有強權。有時，在強權之下，公義是不復存在的呢! (陳 52)

The interpolation of this kind of comment, with some dismay, weakens the amusing effect of Chen's stories and reinforces the sense of didacticism. A children's story written with a didactic intent tends to lack enchantment, making reading a monotonous drudgery after a day's schoolwork.

The idea of turning children's books into a kind of educational tool diminishes the space where a child can *play*[2], or, adhering to my initial description, signals the destruction of the whimsical garden of fantasy. If we follow Harvey Darton's saying that children's books are "the scene of battle between instruction and amusement, between restraint and freedom, between hesitant morality and spontaneous happiness" (Hunt, An Introduction 27), amusement must give place to morality when didacticism becomes overriding. Still, other critics uphold an

---

[2] "energetic, vulgar, violent, and often blackly farcical" (20).

ambivalent attitude that children's books can teach through amusement. Lesnik-Oberstein in her discussion of "education-amusement divide" names the critic Margery Fisher for exemplification. Fisher thinks that children's writers must present some themes in their works even if the stories are intended to be entertaining, or their books may "eventually dilute their quality as mainstream literature" (69).

In the discussion about subversive children's literature, we have little trouble in assigning it to the category of amusement, owing to its fundamental hypothesis of fun displayed as in children's playthings. Subversive children's literature clearly does not teach with the dictums directed from adults, it plays with the game made up by children in accordance with their own rules and laws. Subversive themes emerge from the revival of the inner child living in authors, who have once been children and have realized the importance of putting aside any bias against children's apparent absence of knowledge. Indeed, children are often surprisingly intelligent and insightful. They "always show great forbearance toward grown-up people" (16), suggests Saint-Exupéry in The Little Prince. Subversive children's writers recognize the "simple wisdom"[3] among children. By putting unconventional ideas in terms of amusement, subversive works for children establish an inverted social structure with amusement in place of seriousness.

---

[2] As Peter Hunt suggests, children's books create a world where the core for its existence is *play,* or to use his exact wording, "where 'the pleasure of the text' is foremost" (An Introduction 26).

[3] Children's wisdom constitutes the most primal insight possessed by human beings before they confront the complexity in the world. The Romantic poet William Wordsworth subverts adults' domination over children by claiming "[t]he Child is Father of the Man" (209). Wordsworth glorifies children's affinity with nature, which endows them with a spontaneous response to their surroundings.

Evidently, subversive children's literature has presented something in its revolt against conventional values, yet this theme does not in the least affect our decision to classify subversive children's works as amusement. On the contrary, the theme of subversion contributes to the entertaining elements of subversive children's literature in its revelation of ludicrous aspects in life, which are observed from a child's innocent as well as unadulterated perspective. Children reading this type of story can find echoes of their own voices, obtaining double pleasure in viewing funny things that happened as well as recognizing their unspoken thought reflected in the stories. In opposition to Fisher's argument, the lasting value of subversive children's literature does not come from its teaching through amusement, but from its rebellion through amusement. To achieve this result, most of the time, subversive children's literature is written in the genre of fantasy[4], hence the celebration of imagination.

Exemplary subversive children's writers like Kenneth Grahame and A. A. Milne are eager to look for a place where "a constant escape from the dreary realities of grown-up existence" (Reynolds 26) is available. Their tales are imbued with an aura of magical possibilities and consequently develop an alienation from the normative world. According to Ursula K. Le Guin, the author of the Earthsea trilogy, the free play of imaginative power is essential for "the child"[5] to survive till

---

[4] The genre of fantasy liberates children from adults' suppression and a certain amount of freedom is granted, in particular the way children think. Le Guin points out that "to create what Tolkein calls a 'secondary universe' is to make a new world" (Butts 106). In fantasy, children can find another world.

[5] "The child" refers to the "mental child" or the "psychological child" who remains alive even after one passes the stage of childhood.

adulthood. Adults fear that this kind of resourceful power is chaotic and so dismiss "such play as frivolous, or immoral, or false". However, they do not know that they are paving the way for "the surest way of murdering the child in [them]—indeed, the surest way that the tyrants of mediocrity and the status quo could ever devise" (Barron xx-xxi). Subversive children's writers, who write with the child living inside them, present an autonomous world for their readers. In this realm of spontaneous creativity, children can upset the sterile life and openly explore the possible with their inborn curiosity, hence the celebration of inventive power.

In Le Guin's words, adults who have never come across fantasy or the power of imagination are turned into "dead children" or "adult monsters" (Barron xxiv) because the deprivation has numbed their sensibilities. The "dead children" do not believe that there are gold coins in a shabby magic purse as they proceed to judge in their usual manner of pragmatism and "rationality". However, they regret the missing chance later on when a little child opens the magic purse out of a quirky notion and discovers the treasure inside. In the boundless extent of fantasy, we can wander in dreams and uncover the unexpected elements in our quest for a renewal in life. The adoption of fantasy provides a valid means for subversive children writers to take off in a new direction, heading towards perennial promises of innovation and an ideal version of reality.

As I have asserted earlier, almost all subversive children's writers possess an inner child, whose existence characterizes their thinking with the "minority group" of

children. Subversive writers either refuse to grow up[6], as in the case of J. M. Barrie, or they tend to sublimate childhood, which they think far supersedes their adult lives. Individualistic children's writers like Mark Twain or Hans Christian Andersen think that adulthood is no more than a "stultification of the genius and vitality of childhood" (Frey and Griffith 223). Children enjoy reading classics of these writers because they have the feelings of conversing with an intellectually compatible confidante.

Hong Kong children's writer He Zi何紫 is especially adept at turning himself into a child's friend by removing his adult self. His autobiographical works Me as a Child《童年的我》 and Me as a Youth《少年的我》 detail the bygone incidents of his childhood during the war period. Even though in the story the child suffers from the Japanese sabotage, his carefree nature enables him to ignore the bloodthirsty scene occurring in the adults' world. A naughty and adventurous child, though the converse model of an obedient child according to the adults' standard, becomes the hero of the majority of children.

He Zi considers impishness of children the main source of harmless fun in one's life. In his works, He Zi never condemns children's mischievous acts such as the nicknaming of teachers, the fighting with paper bullets, or roaming the streets. The success of this author, to a great extent, can be attributed to his spontaneity in

---

[6] Besides Barrie, Kenneth Grahame and A. A. Milne are also scared of growing up. They attempt to preserve the transient childhood in their works. Both The Wind in the Willows and the Pooh stories create "idyllic childhood" (Reynolds 26) in which the authors can capture the natural goodness in children. Lewis Carroll has no fear of being an adult, but he enjoys his childhood enormously with the game of story invention.

regressing to the state of childhood while he writes, hence exemplifying the qualification possessed by a popular children's writer:

> The best writers have always been on the children's side, not by the rather unattractive but not uncommon method of conspiratorially claiming to be the only grown-up who truly understands children, but by demonstrable sympathy with them. This is often attributed to preternatural insight but in fact owes more to a long memory. (Mark xix)

The mere pleasure of re-living part of childhood motivates subversive children's writers to create works of enduring value. Children at all ages find subversive children's literature comforting because in real life, adults showing real sympathy with children are hard to find. Antoine de Saint-Exupéry maximizes the gap of communication between adults and children in The Little Prince. This much-loved parable satirically exhibits the general preoccupation and indifference of grown-ups. Children are disheartened because of adults' incapacity to comprehend what seems to be obvious from a child's point of view: "[g]rown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them" (Saint-Exupéry 6). For this reason, subversive children's writers are exceptional adults because they not only understand the inner lives of children but they also remember exactly the time when they were children[7]. To use Le Guin's

---

[7] In the dedication of The Little Prince to Leon Werth, Saint-Exupéry comments that: "[a]ll grown-ups were once children—although few of them remember it" (4).

words, subversive children's writers are "children who survived" (Barron xxiv) amidst the complexity of reality.

Not surprisingly, we discover that many subversive children's writers are women owing to their close contact with children in the roles of teachers, governesses or mothers. According to Kimberley Reynolds, many women writers are eager to make use of the less interrupted arena offered by children's literature. Writings for children allow them to "poke fun at the male establishment" (Reynolds 29) and even to subvert the domination of male rule in a child's voice. This innocent voice of a child gives women writers volubility to address controversial issues such as gender, race and class. As a result, discussion about subversion of gender socialization in children's literature gives us more insight into another side of the coin, from where a change in women's roles is feasible and differences between the sexes are lessened.

瓶中巨人

Undressing the Dressed: To Overturn the Traditional Body Fashion[1]

> Even in the simplest stories it is possible to find characters that verify truth about human nature.
> Rebecca J. Lukens, *A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature*

Just as Lukens suggests, in a simple story, we can discover through the characters truths of human nature. From a minor change one can foresee the biggest movement, as in a national revolution. The originating factor may merely come from the discontent of a few. The storming of the Bastille to release imprisoned political offenders triggered the radical French Revolution and the impact of this political turmoil was far-reaching. We can sometimes identify social changes from the observation of minute details, such as dressing and fashion, which are apparently ordinary things in our mundane life. A plausible answer to this phenomenon is that although fashion is a worldwide industry largely motivated by profit, body fashion can at times duly externalize our inner psychology. As many fashion designers have claimed, their avant-garde notions in design have sprung from their instinctive feelings. Clothes can be a kind of language for expression; like literature, their designs can be a form of art, emerging out of the "spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" (Wordsworth 160). Here I am not going to digress too much about dressing-up; yet to serve as an introduction, I would like to draw your attention to Jo March in Little Women, who has "a fly-away look to her clothes" (Alcott 5). Her "uncomfortable appearance [as] a girl", in addition to her carefree attitude towards a decent girl's look, is exactly the reason for

---

[1] Here, "body fashion" refers to all methods of adorning the human body.

our loving her. Even as adults, many of us still retain the impressive image of this subversive character, Jo March, in our memories of childhood[2].

To have a glimpse of how body fashion becomes a tool of manipulation or subversion in the stories chosen for this study, I shall start from examining the language of clothes and exploring the fantastical wardrobe stocked by the children's writers. To begin with, one should take into account the fact that a character can be examined both inwardly and outwardly. By examining a character's outward appearance, emotions, reactions and responses to others, we have a partial understanding of the character in action. To contemplate the reflections and inner thoughts of the same character, we envision a full picture of his psychology, which is indispensable to our identification with him as a real person[3]. My analysis of a character's way of dressing, though belonging to an outward review, has made full use of the detailed portrayal preferred by many children's writers[4]. "Details" says Joan Aiken, "are crucially important in

---

[2] Feminist critics Shirley Foster and Judy Simons in the preface to their works What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of 'Classic' Stories for Girls recall their desire to imitate their idol, Jo March, at the age of nine. Certainly, in an adult's age, both of them are still impressed by Jo's "very challenge to conventional femininity" (ix).

[3] A fully developed character can always arouse our identification with him/her. Such a character is called a "round character". In A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature, Rebecca J. Lukens tells us that "we know [a round] character well, because the many traits are demonstrated in the action of the story. . . . The character is so fully developed that we may even be able to predict actions and reactions. Yet, like a real person, the character may surprise us or respond impetuously on occasion. It is as though we know the character so well that the character has become a real person, one we wish we could meet or might enjoy knowing" (Lukens 47). Jill P. May in Children's Literature and Critical Theory: Reading and Writing for Understanding, also says that many authors of children's books like to use realistic characters because children will like and sympathize with them.

[4] Frances Hodgson Burnett was keen on elaborating her works with details. As she once suggested to writers, "It is not enough to mention they [the characters] have tea; you must specify the muffins"

children's writing" (Aiken 16). Since children's literature is usually put in a simple narrative pattern[5], the way we scrutinize a story as such is to gather portions and fragments of the work and like a Sherlock Holmes pay close attention to details, in the hope that larger themes or issues will be revealed.

Often, a large portion of a children's story is devoted to describing the seemingly frivolous details of characters: clothes, accessories, make-up (if it is applicable) and hairstyle. Concomitant with these portrayals of dressing is the revelation of adult-child politics induced by the divergent definitions of what constitutes appropriate dress codes for little boys and girls. *The different perspectives of adults and children are made more readily discernible, considering their expectations towards ordinary things such as clothing and fashion.* The traditional notion that dresses and make-up are reserved for girls has now become a wavering truth; however, owing to their economic dependence on parents, little children have limited choices in almost everything. They cannot decide for themselves but usually submit to wear what adults consider proper, for adults are the designers and tailors most of the time:

(Chevalier 161). Here is another example taken from the novel by Louisa Alcott: while claiming that "young readers like to know 'how people look'"(Alcott 5), the narrator in Little Women gives us full sketches of the four sisters, Meg, Jo, Amy and Beth.

[5] Many critics and scholars have discussed the style of writing in children's literature. An Introduction to Children's Literature by Peter Hunt suggests that the "simplicity" of children's works is a corollary of their marginal status in the literary system:

> Because they are, in the main, marginalized by the arbiters of literary taste, children's books are thought to have certain appropriate characteristics (such as simplicity of language, limited viewpoint, or perfunctory characterization) and, consequently, many books are produced which have these characteristics. (4)

> Parents, who represent the social world, control their children's wardrobes and thus their earliest images of themselves, first seen as reflections in the mirror. As children grow, they may be encouraged in self-expression and self-identity or restricted in the development of a sense of self by parents who either allow them or forbid them to choose what they want to wear. (Scott 72)

Consequently, parents do not simply impose their ideas of proper attire on their next generation; they have also recognizably turned children into inheritors of their crafted social images.

In Fashion as Communication, Malcolm Barnard introduces fashion and clothing as ways of communicating gender, class or sexual identities:

> Fashion and clothing, that is, may be the most significant ways in which social relations between people are constructed, experienced and understood. The things that people wear give shape and color to social distinctions and inequalities, thereby legitimating and naturalizing those social distinctions and inequalities. (Barnard 7)

Echoing the same argument as Barnard, Carole Scott also highlights the important messages conveyed through the code of dressing:

> Dress is not trivial. It is a necessary form of communication, particularly in urban society, and we use it all the time to convey unspoken signals to those around us. Sometimes judged immoral, it is also a system of coded

> moral precepts: the way we dress conforms to a whole range of moral and social customs and attitudes, and often, even today, we flout sartorial conventions at our peril. (71-2)

Owing to the functional and articulate nature of one's attire, we can actually observe the implications brought forth by the clothing and ornamentation of a certain character. To provide a handy example: one can easily identify the rigid demarcation of gender from the dressing of male or female protagonists depicted in fiction.

The idea of putting reddish powder on a woman's face seems so natural to a nine-year-old genius novelist, Daisy Ashford, that she portrays the heroine Ethel in The Young Visiters(1890) with an indispensable wearing of red rouge. Perhaps J. M. Barrie is right in saying: "[t]his powder, which she [Ashford] spells 'ruge', went a little to her head, and it accompanies Ethel on her travels with superb effect" (Barrie 9-10). The idea for a lady to wear rouge does not come to Ashford automatically; rather, it is the effect coming from the socialization of her family members, and probably "the visiters (sic)", whom she sees dabbing rouge on their faces (Barrie 9). Young as Ashford is, she believes that the use of rouge for feminine beauty is essential and is evidently put on for good purpose: "I shall put some red ruuge (sic) on my face said Ethel because I am very pale owing to the drains in this house" (Ashford 22). The rationale for Ethel to put on rouge sounds well advised for women who wish to enhance their beauty. Little did Ashford know that in the book she is at the same time legitimating a gender-stereotyping convention!

Dressing up in ways that are prescribed by adults, children will simply entrench gender or social inequalities imposed upon them by the society. This motive, however, may not be so easily achieved if the child is one of those like Heidi, Mary Lennox, and Jo March. These characters, while appearing in the sacred texts of childhood, may have ventured with us as companions and models, even if mischievous, in our passage to adulthood.

A Child of Nature--Dressing in Freedom

It is not surprising that much popular children's literature has heroes and heroines bouncing out of the social constraints, and the first step that they take is to redress themselves as they like, that is, out of the confinement of their gender. In order to run as fast as Peter, Heidi in her eponymous book undoes her shawl and little dress. To be equivalent to Peter in ability, Heidi first has to remove the visible feminine constraint, her dress, from her little body. Her envy of the agile Peter, "who jump[s] about so easily in his light trousers and bare feet" (Spyri 11), urges her to do a little naughty thing which angers her aunt Deta:

> When Deta [sees] the little party of climbers she crie[s] out shrilly: "Heidi, what have you done? What a sight you are! Where are your dresses and your shawl? Are the new shoes gone that I just bought for you, and the new stockings that I made myself? Where are they all, Heidi?" (Spyri 12)

The child, being free and comfortable without the burdensome clothing, shows no repentance for her deed and replies that she does not want them anymore. Later on she tells her grandfather that she just wants to "go about like the light-footed goats" (Spyri 18).

Heidi is the child in every one of us; she rejects social and sexual restraints for she is a child of nature, "a Romantic idealization of childhood innocence and goodness that was prevalent in late nineteenth-century literature and culture" (Bixler 223). When compared to the dressing of her aunt Deta, who "wore a hat with feathers and a dress with such a train that it swept up everything that lay on the cottage floor" (Spyri 52), Heidi's simple attire and her bare feet characterize the pastoral ideals. In this manner, her intuitive rebellion against restricted social norms becomes a sensible act to exemplify her oneness with nature.

Heidi's affinity with nature is manifested in instances where her cheeks glow red by running outdoors and she becomes homesick for the Alps when in Frankfurt. Heidi (1881), a pastoral romance by Johanna Spyri (1827-1901) (Bixler 224), engages part of our childhood memories because we both envy and extol Heidi's impulse to be her real self--the child of nature:

> . . . she brings the little-ray-of-sunshine idea of girls right to the fore. The story says that it's much better to be up on the mountain in God's good sun and fresh air, with toasted cheese and goat's milk for food, and hay to sleep on, than to live with good, rich people and their (largely nasty)

> servants in Frankfurt. God looks after everything and Heidi is His skipping for joy, or brave little suffering angel, who melts the crusty heart of an old recluse. (Dixon 13)

Heidi's possession of therapeutic power endowed by the open air enables her to consummate her own and others' lives, including those of her grandfather, Peter's grandmother and the invalid girl, Clara. Alice Byrnes, in The Child: An Archetypal Symbol in Literature for Children and Adults argues that Heidi presents "the archetypal theme of the child who restores the broken adult to well being" (24).

Heidi's healing love, to an extent, is derived from her intimate interaction with the natural world. Spyri, in particular, creates an intricate linkage between her created character and the pastoral idyll, where Heidi can find the source of energy to counter the civilized urban life. The bond with nature gives Heidi an extra sensibility to the open world and also a peremptory disconnection from the artificiality in town, hence escaping from the model of feminine ideal insisted on by the housekeeper Miss Rottenmeier:

> A great many rules followed now about behavior at all times, about the shutting of doors and about going to bed, and a hundred other things. Poor Heidi's eyes were closing, for she had risen at five that morning, and leaning against her chair she fell asleep. (Spyri 62-3)

Heidi's refusal to be socialized as a presentable young lady indicates that in her quest for experience, the preservation of a "mountain identity" (Bixler 227) is more important for her than anything else on an emotional level.

The contrast of nature and nurture, the juxtaposition of "born-free" country and structured city, make the rebellion against the caged Sesemann house all the more reasonable and justifiable. Certainly, the life-enhancing image of Heidi and her unintentional amusing deeds sometimes pop up in our collective dreams, hence consoling us with the assured wisdom of a child.

A Child of Courage —Dressing in Independence

Louisa M. Alcott in Little Women (1868) overwhelms little readers' heart with an iconoclastic female character, Jo March, whose "boyish tricks" (Alcott 4) and uncompromising contempt of feminine adornment turn her into a "tomboy" model for most girls[6]. As Perry Nodelman tells us, millions of girls who have experienced the growth of the four sisters would "have generally singled out the tomboyish Jo as the March sister they most identify with—not the sweet Meg or the saintly Beth, both of whom represent more traditionally desirable feminine traits" (119). Indeed, Jo appeals to girls directly with her unrestrained spirit highlighted in her unique presentation of the concept of feminine identity.

Unlike her sister Meg who is very self-conscious about her appearance, Jo "never [troubles] herself much about dress" (Alcott 33). Her deliberate resistance of a womanly look gives her an additional sense of specialty when put in parallel to Meg, who dresses:

---

[6] Bob Dixon states that Jo is the one, among the four sisters, who calls for our identification (8). Rebecca Lukens also says that "[i]t is the character of Jo March that carries Little Women and has made it one of girlhood's favorites" (57).

> in silvery drab, with a blue velvet snood, lace frills, and the pearl pin; [while] Jo in maroon, with a stiff, gentlemanly linen collar and a white chrysanthemum or two for her only ornament. (Alcott 35)

Jo stands out among the four sisters not because of her special talent or beauty. The narrator lets her have colt-like limbs, "a decided mouth, a comical nose, and sharp, grey eyes" (Alcott 5), yet we do not find Jo in the least ugly or unpleasant. Just like many other little girls, feminist critics Shirley Foster and Judy Simons idolize Jo owing to her challenge to the feminine heritage (ix). Their experiences of encountering Jo are not uncommon to readers who are impatient with the drab aspects of women's culture as well as those who long for alterations in their defined image as a docile female.

Jo protests against the limitations on deportment and physical movement that lead girls to be all-round stereotypes. Jo has in many cases strenuously resisted her gender identity and hankered after the male privilege of greater power and freedom:

> I hate to think I've got to grow up, and be Miss March, and wear long gowns, and look as prim as a China-aster! It's bad enough to be a girl, anyway, when I like boys' games and work and manners! I can't get over my disappointment in not being a boy; and it's worse than ever now, for I'm dying to go and fight with papa, and I can only stay at home and knit, like a poky old woman! (Alcott 4)

Jo's untidy dressing, say her scorched skirt and her spoilt gloves, her loose habits as well as her literary ambition produce a kind of tension in a male-dominated world. What Jo

considers to be self-assertion and expressions of exuberance are interpreted by her male counterparts as a kind of "sexual restiveness" (Foster and Simons 6). Jo's passion for individuality is only given vent to by her slovenly appearance and her bold speech, characterizing her growth with a "celebration of female unruliness" (Foster and Simons 16).

Jo is a rebel in the process of female socialization and she serves as an alter ego of many apparently obedient girls who comply uneasily with the usual restrictive rhetoric. According to Elizabeth Lennox Keyser, Jo March "is a subversive figure in so far as she expresses a woman's legitimate longing for a larger sphere of activity"(57). Jo sustains our memories not only because she is a non-conformist in feminine decorousness, but also because she jocularly holds our private fantasies in her solid presence:

> Jo is alive—aggressive and tomboyish, awkward and clumsy. She invents, acts, directs, complains and teases, sings off-key, and resents any restriction that would turn her into a stereotyped girl. She makes up games, dreams of heroism in active roles, and without guilt or gloom drops her bread on the carpet, butter side down. (Lukens 57-8).

Though only harmlessly displaying her gaiety of spirit, Jo has already become the courageous heroine who acts out what many girls in private hope to become. Jo's ambitious free mind and her literary flair are later on revived by Jerusha in Jean Webster's Daddy-Long-Legs (1912).

A Child with Emotion Outpour--Dressing in Pride

Unlike Jo March in Little Women, Mary Lennox in The Secret Garden (1911) does not subvert the feminine mode of adornment by explicitly displaying dislike towards Mr Craven's manipulation of her little wardrobe, for he would like to add more "colour on her" (Burnett 29). Indeed, the sour expression that Mary "wears" on her face has made whatever she dresses unfeminine and unattractive, hence undermining the magic label of a lady's wear. The dress that Mary puts on does not quite indicate her gender identity as a little girl; contrary to her outward dressing, subversion of gender role operates in her rebellious temperament and her disagreement with the socially acceptable behavior for a little girl. Critic Elizabeth Lennox Keyser opines that "it is Mary's aberrance from the conventionally feminine that generates the reader's sympathy" (Foster & Simons 180). Mary does not want to please anyone through conformity, as she has been unwanted and unloved since birth. Her mother is said to have no intention of having a little girl at all. Instead of becoming an affectionate little doll, Mary seeks an alternative means of drawing attention—to appear revolting—and finds her joy by disrupting adults' sobriety.

Mary is never portrayed in the manner of a feminine ideal; at the beginning of the book, she is even described as "the most disagreeable-looking child ever seen" (Burnett 1) or "as tyrannical and selfish a little pig as ever lived" (Burnett 2). Obviously, Mary understands the model of a feminine beauty in the figure of her mother:

> . . . the Memsahib—Mary used to call her that oftener than anything else—was such a tall, slim, pretty person and wore such lovely clothes. Her hair was like curly silk and she had a delicate little nose which seemed to be disdaining things, and she had large laughing eyes. All her clothes were thin and floating, and Mary said they were "full of lace". (Burnett 3)

The conscious acknowledgement of a woman's charm does not lure Mary to imitate that splendid impression or to transform herself into the same kind of sex object. In contrast, fretful Mary never achieves the winsome effect that her mother has on others:

> "She is such a plain child," Mrs Crawford said pityingly afterward. "And her mother was such a pretty creature. She had a very pretty manner, too, and Mary has the most unattractive ways I ever saw in a child. The children call her "Mistress Mary Quite Contrary", and though it's naughty of them, one can't help understanding it." (Burnett 10)

Judging from the comments of her surrounding adults, Mary is simply an oddly plain and moody child. Yet the sympathetic tone of Burnett takes the side of Mary Lennox against the unfair criticism of adults, who in Mary's eyes are nothing better. The prim and refined Mrs Medlock becomes an old-fashioned funny figure in "a very purple dress, a black silk mantle with jet fringes on it, and a black bonnet with purple velvet flowers which stuck up and trembled when she moved her head" (Burnett 11). Even worse, the

reference to Mrs Medlock's "highly-coloured face" (Burnett 12) sounds much more offensive than a simple remark to her overdoing of powder and rouge (Burnett 11).

Fanciful dresses do not enhance the beauty of Mary, but when Mary attempts to put on the decorative color[7] conjured up by the magic of the Secret Garden, she radiates a kind of inner beauty, the "natural splendid happiness" (Lurie 141) that changes her image dramatically. The housekeeper, Mrs Medlock, later on voices her admiration:

> She's [Mary] begun to be downright pretty since she's filled out and lost her ugly little sour look. Her hair's grown thick and healthy looking and she's got a bright colour. The glummest, ill-natured little thing she used to be, and now her and Master Colin laugh together like a pair of crazy young ones. (Burnett 260)

Burnett conveys to us that "beauty" is not a unique feature for girls alone; boys can also be beautiful as shown in the case of Colin, whose glamour springs from his apparent inner growth, a miracle of nature:

> He [Colin] was glowing with life, and his running had sent splendid colour leaping to his face. He threw the thick hair back from his forehead and lifted a pair of strange grey eyes—eyes full of boyish laughter and rimmed with black lashes like a fringe. (Burnett 294)

---

[7] This refers to what Dickon's mother believes to be the remedy for Mary's sullen mood: "Let her run wild in the garden. Don't look after her too much. She needs liberty and fresh air and romping about" (Burnett 119).

The two children learn to capture some of the attributes that are lurking inside them and to exemplify the equal beauty of their inner lives. In drawing attention to the similarities between the two children rather than emphasizing their different gender identities, the novel conveys subversion of gender stereotyping. In The Secret Garden, Burnett is working with a redefinition of beauty and a reshaping of gender roles. Mary, the princess that saves the sleeping prince, is also the fairy who consummates the happy ending in Cinderella. This technique of "subversive intertextuality" (29), a term suggested by Foster and Simons, is a powerful device deployed by Burnett to threaten the existing gender orderings. In Lissa Paul's article "Feminist Criticism: From Sex-Role Stereotyping to Subjectivity", she cites from recent feminist criticism to highlight the shifted perspective in understanding the novel as a demonstration of "women's healing and successful communities of women" (103).

The Secret Garden is reminiscent of the gothic tale in Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre[8]. Only Mary is a child version of Jane, Mary obtains her eventual happiness from her independent struggle with the constriction in the stale mansion. With her strong-will, leadership ability and boisterous high spirits, qualities that are often attributed to males, the once disagreeable Mary has not only cured herself by her own "magic", but has also transformed the lives of both Colin and his father. Adrian Gunther suggests that "female energy" pervades the novel (Bixler 18) and the portrayal of Mary's power

[8] Ann Thwaite notes that there are several parallels between The Secret Garden and Jane Eyre, and the similarities of the two novels can hardly be denied as a mere coincidence (Bixler 16).

asserts female influence over the miserable environment of the Misselthwaite Manor. The Secret Garden and its pastoral idyll evoke our long-lost qualities of what Burnett calls "the natural inheritance of mankind—love and joy" (Lurie 142).

The return to nature and the primordial signifies the excessive function of clothes and adornments, which are products of civilization and society. Children, being members of the same carefree primitive tribe, realize that their customs and culture do not request them to worry about clothing and fashion. Planting strenuously inside the "secret garden", Mary enjoys the outdoor exercise so much that the excited girl begins to throw "her coat off, and then her hat, and without knowing it she [is] smiling down on to the grass and the pale green points all the time" (Burnett 81). Mary displays her integration with nature by "bringing with her a waft of fresh air full of the scent of the morning" (Burnett 196) and this fragrance is indeed the best perfume for one to wear. After a process of self-discovery and self-confirmation in the "secret garden", Mary no longer "allow[s] herself to be dressed like a doll" (Burnett 29) or in frocks full of lace. It is precisely because of her rejection of an orthodox upbringing offered by the adults' world that Mary is able to be her own decision-maker and is capable of paving her way to full autonomy.

A Child with Assertive Power--Dressing in Self-expression

In a modern world setting, Not Dressed Like That, You Don't!(1991) by Yvonne Coppard sheds light on clashes between a mother and her daughter in a confessional diary form, providing a vivid delineation of issues such as the generation gap and sibling

rivalry. Though not openly about the subversion of gender roles, Coppard portrays an illustrative picture for our understanding of a mutinous teenage girl, Jennifer, in the twentieth century.

As the book title Not Dressed Like That, You Don't! implies, the conflict between Jennifer and her mother arises from their divergent attitudes towards a girl's proper dressing. Although nowadays parents like Jenny's mother have a less critical view of the styles that their children wear, they still expect children to follow their choices at times. In Jenny's diary, Jenny reacts with tepid feelings to her mother's "no-surprise" offer to her: "As for Mum—well, she buys all her clothes at Marks and Spencer's. She also buys *me* things from there, and expects me to wear them. Enough said" (Coppard 1). The juxtaposition of Jenny's and her mother's voices allow both of them to express their thoughts simultaneously, hence diminishing the effects of Jenny's subversion by riveting some of our sympathy to her parents. Jenny's ruthless criticism of her parents, whom she caricatures as "a couple of old fogies" (Coppard 4), seems to be lopsided, yet it can effectively arouse the empathy of adolescents at her age. The dichotomy of conservation and innovation is encapsulated in the unresolved conflict between the parents and the young in the fictional world.

The text unravels that although at present the control of parents upon their children has lessened[9], the battle between adults and children goes on as grown-ups are

[9] The society underwent different changes in its traditional assumptions about the young, as time flew to the modern period. Parents had altered their aspirations of children's roles and so gradually "children

still imposing their power of influence on their next generation, who have at the same time become more and more conscious of their own individuality. Based on the recurrent reference to one's outfits, Coppard articulates how gender socialization is more a matter of peer group influence than a meek adoption of adults' preferred feminine image. Since all Jenny's friends are fond of clothes that are "black and straight" (Coppard 10), the lady-like pink seems to be an unpopular colour that terrifies the trendy girl. Therefore, Jenny refuses to wear the "REVOLTING pink" at the wedding and satirizes the "DISGUSTING dress" as the "salmon vol-au-vents at the reception" (Coppard 62). For Jenny, to be accepted and identified by her friends are far more important than imitating adults' endorsed image. There is a touch of irony in Coppard's description of how Jenny prioritizes her friendship, rather than maintaining a close relationship with her parents. While Jenny's mother works hard to steer Jenny in the right direction in accordance with adults' expectations, Jenny seems to be supportive of her "weird" friend Cathy:

> Mum said today that I shouldn't see so much of Cathy. She thinks she's bad influence. Just because Cathy's clothes are way-out and her mum's a bit weird, my mum's against her. Typical of parents. Cathy can't help what goes on. Her dad left them last year; she doesn't even know where he is. I know Mum's only doing what she thinks is best, but she's such a snob. (Coppard 67)

---

came to be allowed more freedom in their activities, the number of lessons and 'don't' within the children's

After Jenny has confided in herself in the diary, the spotlight switches to Jenny's mother and her outpouring of feelings. As a caring parent, the mother is naturally worried about her daughter's close association with the teenage girl Catherine, "a very strange girl: all black clothes, dyed black hair and deathly white face, like something from the grave" (Coppard 67). Certainly, the defiant girl Jenny fails to comply with her mother, thus inevitably intensifying the tension that has existed for ages between the two generations.

Not Dressed Like That, You Don't! is a work that speaks to the heart of today's youngsters, who develop both physically and mentally in a rather liberated modern world. An analysis of this novel suggests to us three main interpretative possibilities deriving from the perspective of a contemporary children's author. 1) The formation of a child's feminine identity does not merely come from adults' conceptualization of girlhood, but parts of the influence can be attributed to one's peer group in a patriarchal society. From the novel, we realize that it is not so much the ubiquitous adults who enforce the prevalent feminine ideal but the girls themselves. 2) Adults are not always the "suppressive monsters" who forbid everything arbitrarily. If we consider the viewpoint of Jenny's mother, we shall realize that she does many things out of her anxiety and concern for her daughter, instead of being irrationally repressive. We also shift our sympathy from the heroine to the adult when we hear the mother lament "How can simply loving a child end up so disastrously" (Coppard 103). 3) Subversive behaviour prompted by children as shown in Jenny's case, is not always justifiable.

---

stories diminished commensurately" (Egoff 32).

Attention should also be paid to what the parents say before we make our final judgement of who is in the wrong. Not Dressed Like That, You Don't! is about rebellious teenagers, yet it is perhaps the most euphemistic show ever staged by Coppard to demonstrate to young readers that children do not always lodge the right complaints against adults.

*

The young subversive heroines in the children's works that we have analyzed so far display more interest in their self-representation and personal growth than in tending their feminine beauty. However, children like Heidi, Mary Lennox and Jo March can be viewed as attractive girls owing to their individualized temperaments, which help enhance their charisma to inspire people. Unlike an archetypal Snow White narrative which is encircled by characters related to beauty, Heidi never is the princess of unusual charm whereas Mary and Jo do not in any scene appreciate their own appearance in front of mirrors. All three of them empower the female gender with their autonomous selfhood, leading young girls away from the domestic sphere of pleasing the opposite sex to an expanding world of new adventures.

In an example selected from Hong Kong children's literature as set out below, we will envisage how a boy bargains for his movement spontaneity and autonomy by imparting the message to adults through what he wears.

Children in Struggle —Dressing in Coded Messages

Pun Shuk-han in her article on "The Use of the Concept of Gender Role in Local Youth Research" concludes that males also care much about their outward appearance while minding one's appearance is generally considered to be a stereotypically female sexual trait. Pun reveals in her research that the prevailing perception of gender differences endorsed by our society may be inconsistent with the actual situation in our everyday life. In the fictional world, we seldom encounter sturdy male characters who bother about their appearance, as exemplified by Shi-qing 施慶 in "Fever" 《發燒記》 by the Pang Sisters. Pang Jin Ying and her sister surprise their readers by associating the attribute of physical beauty with a hero instead of a heroine. From the young boy's permed hair to his fashionable wear, the authors in their habitual humourous tone enable us to have a glance at how boys conceive of their self-images, underlining that concentration on demeanor is no longer the privilege enjoyed by girls alone. The emphasis that the child hero unflinchingly puts on his hairstyle and clothing offers inspiration to readers who are in pursuit of different options during their journeys of self-discovery.

The story "Fever" dramatizes the character Shi-qing's inward emotional struggle via the fever metaphor. The high temperature induced by the hot weather and the excitement of pending adventures ignites the rebellious passion of Shi. The stuffy atmosphere, accompanied by the burning sun, symbolizes the repressive commands issued by adults:

> Immediately he [Shi-qing] thought of the warning of Ms Cheng (nicknamed Magnifying Glass), his blood immediately surged from his toes to his brain－that's why his forehead burnt! . . . The feverish sunshine scorched his standing hair. The air was stuffed with the suffocating heat; his head expanded like a hot-air balloon that was going to burst. It seemed like catching a sudden cold, which rendered everywhere stuffy. (My translation) (Pang 3)
>
> 一想起放大鏡的話,血液就立即由腳趾湧上大腦--怪不得額頭熱燒燒啦! . . . 發燒的太陽從他每根豎起的頭髮燃著,空氣夾著窒息的燠熱,腦袋膨脹如將爆的氫氣球;又恍惚是一陣逼切的感冒,使周圍泛著悶氣。

The hero is suppressed at home and school; the authors, with the technique of pathetic fallacy, allow the sun to reflect Shi-qing's anger and thus emit fierce heat.

Shi-qing's dissatisfied emotion is externalized in his defiant dressing. His long and permed hair seems feminine and is unacceptable to the teacher in charge of school discipline, who reprimands: "A man's hair is most important to his appearance. Nowadays, many youngsters just act against the natural way. . . ." (My translation) (Pang 11). 放大鏡已經站在他面前,摘下眼鏡,并且開始訓話了。 人的儀容首重頭髮,時下少年人總是反自然而行. . . . . The so-called "natural" as defined by the teacher indeed refers to the preservation of the status quo; according to the adult in the story, every member of a society is obliged to comply with the convention. Children inevitably have to limit their range of activities and relinquish their individualized

character traits for a society to perpetuate its cultural ideology, hence ensuring the societal balance when everyone in the society knows his or her place: "Suppression--if at all conscious－would presumably be considered a positive means of achieving the desired state of harmony" (Lehnert 119). Actually, the cultural stereotypes of male and female are reflected through many youthful protagonists, who remain "stock characters" under the premise of maintaining the status quo:

> Cultural stereotypes of appropriate sex roles have been used extensively in the portrayal of females and males in children's readers, picture books, and children's encyclopedias, and comic strips. Male characters are likely to be active, brave, and competent problem-solvers; female characters are likely to be passive, fearful, and unable to solve their own problems. (White 251)

Shi-qing refuses to be standardized or nurtured into someone who is mentally stagnant by emerging from the mass production of a lifeless, uniform mould. While perceiving the adults' society in a satirical and astringent manner, the child tries to deprive the intimidating adults of essential human qualities. For example, the student nicknames his teacher "Magnifying Glass"放大鏡 because she is as sharp-sighted as a leopard 豹子眼(Pang 3). In the view of the child, the teacher also seems to be emotionless and mechanical. The Pang sisters offer very few descriptions of the adults in the story; indeed, every grown-up appearing in the story can only be characterized by their dictatorial voices of moralizing and manipulation. The incessant warnings of

"Remember to cut your hair" and "Behave yourself" from the surrounding adults drown the child's plea for autonomy in his choice of lifestyle. The Pang sisters enrich our experience of Shi-qing's anger and his intense hatred of suppression by constantly referring to the personified sun, which is also suffering from a high fever as the child. The undue pressure inflicted on Shi-qing ceases to torment him when he begins to give up hope of retaining his selfhood. The gradually cooling sun symbolizes how Shi-qing's youthful passion dies down subsequently as a result of his numbness to the ludicrous world.

The striking casual wear and hairstyle chosen by Shi-qing manifest in an outwardly manner his desire for a breakthrough. The child has practised self-control in order to imitate the model promoted by grown-ups, yet the process of gaining adults' recognition is too painful for him to bear, especially when the child is forced to confront the clash between his inner self and the reality. The authors heighten the tension of the story by focusing on the day before and during Shi-qing's examination when the child is most in need of comfort; however, the adults around him are shown to be destructive enough to add more pressure on the child. The reality is grim and the child has to make a compromise by sacrificing his freedom of motion in order to negotiate the passage to adulthood. Leaving the story open-ended, the authors let us conjecture the decision made by Shi-qing.

貓頭鷹搬家

If Adults Are Not Always Right, Then Who Is?

You're daft, you're potty, you're barmy,
You ought to join the army.
You got knocked out
With a brussel sprout,
You're daft, you're potty, you're barmy.

A Playground Rhyme from *International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature*

If we blame our children for chanting a vulgar song against us, we will certainly be ashamed of ourselves too, because there was once a time when we sang it even louder to derive pleasure from mocking adults' silliness. From clothes that children wear, games that children play and rhymes that children chant, we notice that children do not always show respect to adults but are highly irreverent at times. The Child's world, though sharing certain cultural and sociological variables from the adults' world, operates with an alternative set of rules incomprehensible to the unsympathetic grown-ups[1]. Since many forgetful adults have obliterated memories of innocence during their process of "metamorphosis", their experienced nature leads them to view children as ego-centered "caterpillars living in cocoons". At the same time, there are some adults who still retain the pleasure of childhood but are reluctant to expose their regressive nostalgia, which they think may render them vulnerable to the competitive world. Whether adults understand it or not, children have constituted a culture of their own

---

[1] Critic Gillian Avery pictures unsympathetic adults as "uncomprehending aliens" to suggest their incongruity when placed within the imaginative world of children. Children's writer Nina Bawden (1925-) reveals that adults often find their effort to understand children is of no avail. The child protagonist Carrie in Bawden's work explains succinctly the reason by telling us that "[g]rown-ups only listen to grown-ups" (Bawden, Carrie's War 138). Though she appears to be pessimistic, Bawden has shown us the helplessness of being a child:

> . . . it's tough being a child in a world run by and for adults. You are so much at adult mercy, people won't take you seriously, you are ignored or pushed around. (Townsend, A Sounding 24)

through their shared codes of behavior, and the survival of this culture relies on children's quizzical reactions to the empire of "giants"[2]. Therefore, the continuing appeal of subversive children's literature such as The Secret Garden, comes from its "portrayal of the life children share away from adults" (Bixler, Secret Garden 5). Subversive children's literature, being the "bible" of the sacred rules of childhood, offers little readers an inclusion in a literary world where fun and delight follow a series of subversive events.

In this chapter, I will continue my discussion about subversion of gender socialization by revealing children's rebellious response to adults' dismissive attitudes toward their abilities, especially when one is a girl. Characters like Matilda in Roald Dahl's Matilda and Arrietty in Mary Norton's The Borrowers make faces at grown-ups who show no belief in their ingenuity. Both Matilda and Arrietty depend on their own wits to resolve their problems in life and they muster their strength to venture away from their parents' supervision. When the child reader vicariously explores the heroines' independence, she can imaginatively emulate the protagonists' fantastic adventures in order to find ways out of adults' watchful eyes: "[c]hildren have enjoyed many of the classical heroes and heroines in children's books because they are gutsy children who independently seek solutions to their problems. Orphans are not uncommon in

---

[2] Roald Dahl (1916--1990), in his autobiographical work about his childhood, describes his headmaster Mr Coombes as a giant:

> All grown-ups appear as giants to small children. But headmasters (and policemen) are the biggest giants of all and acquire a marvelously exaggerated stature. It is possible

children's literature" (May 45). Children's writers sometimes deliberately undermine adults' interference in their works (L. Frank Baum's The Wizard of Oz is a good example), hence leaving an "adult-segregated" environment for the young protagonists to play their own gods. As Nicholas Tucker argues in "How Children Respond to Fiction", the occasional occurrence of adults is a device to cater for children's desire for unrestrained imagination:

> The child needs somebody in a book with whom he can identify as a child. This accounts for the presence of many animals or children themselves in children's books and the comparative paucity of adults, especially parents—it is striking how parents are always got rid of so quickly. Although a child has parents he doesn't necessarily want to read about them, perhaps because he is experimenting with fantasy, with learning about himself, projecting himself into a book where he's not tied down to the fact that he has to go to bed at half past eight and clean his teeth. (181-2)

Children indeed enjoy adventures attempted by unaided subversive characters, whether they are boys or girls, to defy rules of the adults' society and to construct a palatable circumstance where problems will vanish in the air.

---

that Mr Coombes was a perfectly normal being, but in my memory he was a giant, a tweed-suited giant. . . . (BOY 40)

Children in life as in narratives find characters who are courageous enough to step over societal thresholds their typical heroes[3] because these characters, appearing in Tom's Midnight Garden, The Adventures of Pinocchio or The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, "dare to journey alone, to question their situations, and strive to understand why things happen as they do. When they are threatened, they react with trepidation, just as real children would, but they bolster their courage and continue to search for a positive ending to their story" (May 45). What children dare not do in the real world, they seek satisfaction from witnessing the child character in children's stories carry it out on their behalf.

In addition to dauntless heroes and heroines whom the child reader can empathize with, amusing plots and humorous episodes all contribute to the immediate success of much subversive children's literature[4]. According to Martha Wolfenstein, the author of Children's Humor: A Psychological Analysis, children enjoy catching the moment when adults are shown to be in the wrong because they are glad to know that "grown-ups are not infallibly good" (West 103). To subvert adults is hilarious because subversive actions taken by children often involve mischief and mayhem--resistance to

---

[3] Jill P. May cites an example from Virginia Woolf's observation of her daughter Nina, who exemplifies how very young children prefer works with manipulative child characters. Woolf notices that "youthful readers might like the *Alice* books because they are ego-centred idealists who want to control the world and make it behave as they wish it to, and they perceive Alice as liking to do the same thing" (May 165).

[4] Children's writer and reviewer Julia Eccleshare regards humor as the key for the success of a children's work:

> Children love funny books. Whenever it is left to them to compile their own list of favourites they come up with the books that have made them laugh. (55)

authority disguised by means of little tricks against the adults' world. Laughter is universal[5] and when laughter is engendered from reading the humorous events or grotesque depictions, it expresses a liberating power, a power that signals a demolition of "normal regulations and strict laws of behavior policed by state authority" (McGillis, ALP 85). If we borrow Bakhtin's concept of laughter from Rabelais and His World, then the domination of comic culture within subversive children's literature will be easily explained, for laughter "overcomes fear" and "knows no inhibitions, no limitations" (Bakhtin 90). The carnival in Bakhtin's notion is both subversive and rejuvenating; it unfolds "the world anew in its gayest and most sober aspects" (Bakhtin 94). The idea that most subversive events are funny and laughable[6], therefore, motivates us also to an investigation of humor involved in the narration of subversive children's literature.

The Borrowers —The first female Borrower ever seen.

Mary Norton's The Borrowers (1952) attracts small readers with its ingenious plot coming out of the commonplace[7] rather than its elaborate narrative framework,

---

[5] Barry Sanders states that "laughter is such a basic, universal, and useful response that it is difficult to conceive of any group of people—anywhere or any time or any place—not laughing" (6). Mikhail Bakhtin also characterizes laughter as universal, free and boundless. (90)

[6] Northrop Frye in Anatomy of Criticism analyses the subversive element in comedy.

[7] Sheila A. Egoff observes that witty children's books such as Mary Norton's The Borrowers are "based on the working of logical domestic detail predicated on an outlandish premise" (22). According to Peter Hunt, the fantasy world in The Borrowers bears an inseparable link with the "real world" ("Winnie-the-Pooh and Domestic Fantasy" 115). Indeed, Norton captures in "circumstantial detail" (Chevalier 729) the tiny people and their home, which is furnished with things that disappear mysteriously from our houses. The existence of the miniature people offers a humorous explanation for the sudden absence of things, an experience that every one of us shares.

although Barbara Wall suggests that Norton's "skilful narrative technique" helps address "a dual audience"[8] (Wall 259). Despite all the intricacies in narration, the Borrowers books are placed in the canon of children's literature based on their "sense of play"[9], an attribute which determines the survival of children's literature from the "Golden Age" period, as shown in Egoff's argument (22-23). The Borrowers plays the game that children actually get involved with when they play, that is, to build up a secondary world upon existing people and objects. By adding exotic elements to everyday household situations, the book breaks away from the routine while retaining some degrees of familiarity and security for children. The Borrowers, as portrayed by Mary Norton, are small-scale people who survive by borrowing things and names alike from the household above their cave. The name Arrietty is borrowed from the Victorian girl's name Henrietta and the borrowers' lingua franca actually imitatively represents the way that children acquire their languages by slightly modifying them. Not realizing their base means of survival, the Borrowers assume a grotesque relationship with "human beans" as they call them: "They thought human beings were just invented to do the dirty work—great slaves put there for them to use" (Norton 12). Owing to the book's evocative mimicry of Alice's (Arrietty's) adventures in Wonderland (human bean's

---

[8] Intended as a tale told to placate the child Kate, The Borrowers was presumably written for an audience of children. However, Mary Norton made it clear that she "did not quite look upon it as a children's book" because the story "has something of the whole human dilemma—a microcosm of our world and the powers that rule us" (Wall 258). Adults may read the Borrowers series as "a parable of the human condition or of the wanderings of the homeless and stateless of this century" (Chevalier 730).

[9] Johann Huizinga enlightens us with his golden rule "play cannot be denied" in Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture (21).

realm)[10], The Borrowers, in its magnifying-glass design, is enjoyed by thousands of modern readers who sympathize with Arrietty and long for a violation of the enclosed world[11].

Similar to her predecessor Alice, Arrietty also goes through a rite of passage during her adventure; however, Arrietty has fought hard to capture a brand new experience because in her race, girls are not supposed to go borrowing and this is a never-to-be-broken rule. When Arrietty pleads for her first journey in the world of "human beans", even her father Pod expresses surprise at a female Borrower:

> 'All the same,' said Pod uncertainly, 'the risk's there. I never heard of no *girl* going borrowing before.'
>
> 'The way I look at it,' said Homily, 'and it's only now it's come to me: if you had a son, you'd take him borrowing, now wouldn't you? . . . ' (Norton 48)

Arrietty and her cousin Eggletina are "cooped up" (Norton 46) willy-nilly behind gates simply because they were born girls and so pleasure to go out is denied. Leading a restrictive life, both of them are dissatisfied with their concealed existence. While

---

[10] While some people compare the book to Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature suggests that The Borrowers bears some resemblance to The Wind in the Willows, Fungus the Bogeyman and to a slight degree, The Hobbit.

[11] Arrietty is imprisoned in her beneath-the-floor home, which is "securely" fortified:

> The way to the upper world is barred by a series of gates which are ostensibly to keep cats and other predators out, but Arrietty's father admits that they are also "to keep you in". (Carpenter 216)

Eggletina runs away secretly, Arrietty voices her heartfelt feelings against her parents' obstinacy to keep her at home:

> I don't think it's so clever to live on alone, for ever and ever, in a great, big, half-empty house; under the floor, with no one to talk to, no one to play with, nothing to see but dust and passages, no light but candlelight and firelight and what comes through the cracks. (Norton 46)

Arrietty realized that children, being placed under the control of parents, had limited power of influence and to negotiate with adults was difficult because "[p]arents were right, not children" (Norton 47). Even then, Arrietty cannot suppress her opinion but she struggles to take charge of her own life, striving for understanding and acceptance by adults.

Arrietty is not willing to yield to her conservative father nor her over-anxious mother. If she does, she has to sacrifice the liberal space of "the blue sky and grass and suchlike" (Norton 49) and what is more, her "questing spirit" (Chevalier 730). Poor Arrietty in her early teens cannot endure the pangs of boredom in her same old retreat, while at the same time her instinctive drive to comprehend all urges her to experience the outside world, the restricted sphere of males' activities.

Qualities of insistence and persistence help Arrietty to transform the thought of her parents, as the incessant call "I could borrow! I know I could!" finally works its spell for Arrietty to verify her capacities outside her hidden place. The adventurous image of Arrietty is prominent because unlike Homily, the girl dares to confront

uncertainties in the bright world whereas Pod is obliged to borrow and is shocked by being "seen". The Borrowers emerge with exquisite humorous satire by inverting our normal associations, so darkness is linked to security and brightness to uncertainty. Furthermore, stealing is distorted as borrowing and huge-sized human beings are reduced to be "slaves" of the tiny and defenseless Borrowers. In a fantastic world of perverted logic, however, the fictional little creatures are still susceptible to the conventional restrictions imposed on female gender. Arrietty's aspirations to wander in the wilderness and her idea of emigration sound unusually odd to her "scandalized parents" (Chevalier 730).

At the level of characterization, Arrietty has some attributes in common with the subversive heroines who have appeared earlier in our discussion. Characters like Arrietty, Alice, Jo March and Heidi are bold, independent, and, by nature, seekers for self-expression in a male-dominated world. Like Heidi, Arrietty obtains consolation by chasing after high-spirited frivolity in the open air:

> Arrietty ran. The stones in the path were firmly bedded and her light, soft shoes hardly seemed to touch them. How glorious it was to run—you could never run under the floor: you walked, you stooped, you crawled—but you never ran. (Norton 59)

The Borrowers, in general, suffer from agoraphobia, yet young Arrietty is not warned of dangers in the external world. Arrietty is a young explorer for female space, and when her parents look at her adventures as "madness", she moves into the world with an

intention of working out the "truth" from "madness". The sarcasm is always there, for ingenious women are always thought to be mad or are really mad, as shown in the cases of Virginia Woolf and Emily Dickinson. By venturing outside, Arrietty proves that her size and sex are not setbacks for her to inherit her father's role as a borrower. Even more, Arrietty hopes to dispel the superstition that, owing to the fear of her people, they have caught the dreadful shrink as threatened by the boy:

> It was because they were frightened, . . .that they had grown so small. Each generation had become smaller and smaller, and more and more hidden. In the olden days, it seems, and in some parts of England, our ancestors talked quite openly about the "little people". (Norton 12-3)

Arrietty displays her audacity by proving that human beans are not at all horrible. She even works an unprecedented miracle: she befriends a boy.

Mary Norton, with reservation, does not commit totally to creating a wholly subversive character. As the story progresses, the child Arrietty ultimately realizes the hazard of being "seen" and she makes a compromise to reconcile herself to the limitations of her parents' world. In The Borrowers, Arrietty supersedes her parents with her introspective perspective on the future while Pod and Homily are still indulging in their retrospection of the Borrowers' good old days. Arrietty, however, fails to topple the traditional belief that "being seen" is menacing, as her friendship with the boy brings forth perilous consequences to the family. Critic Humphrey Carpenter helps lessen the guilt of Arrietty with the verdict that "however terrible the consequences may be (and

Arrietty's actions eventually lead to the family's flight from its home), the child must break the parental bonds if it is to grow up" (217). At any rate, Arrietty exhibits her heroic and rebellious character by upsetting the Borrowers' rules that delimit the role of a girl and as a result, succeeds in becoming the first female borrower ever seen in their history.

Matilda —You'd better believe it. It's the triumph of a five-year-old girl!

Written from the child's perspective, Matilda (1988) is a book which wakes all adults from their dreams of self-interest and punishes them for their ignoble acts of deception and corruption. Through macabre exaggerations and caricatures of human weaknesses, Dahl turns up with "eerie" yet uproarious disrespect of authoritative human figures, irrespective of their possession of fame and high social status. In order to highlight the unpleasant personality of Matilda's father, Mr Wormwood, Dahl applies a rat metaphor to describe the physical attributes of this philistine character. The strong sense of debasement carried by the metaphor adds to our distaste for the "small ratty-looking man whose front teeth stuck out underneath a thin ratty moustache" (Dahl, Matilda 23).

Through the mouthpiece of Matilda, Dahl makes a good joke of both Shakespeare and Mr Wormwood:

> Matilda's father had a fine crop of black hair which he parted in the middle and of which he was exceedingly proud. "Good strong hair," he was fond of saying, "means there's a good strong brain underneath."

"Like Shakespeare," Matilda had once said to him.

"Like who?"

"Shakespeare, daddy."

"Was he brainy?"

"Very, daddy."

"He had masses of hair, did he?"

"He was bald, daddy." (Dahl, Matilda 57)

The thrills derived from laughing at the baldness of Shakespeare and satirizing the bushy yet content-absent head of Mr Wormwood uncover only part of the subversive elements in Dahl's stories. Interestingly, we see from this little jest that Dahl turns his child protagonist, a girl of five, to subvert the powerful image of two adult males. However, even people who love Shakespeare cannot be angry with Matilda's naughty association, because she is merely conveying a child's crude sense of fun in her innocent tone. Vicki Weissman, a writer for the New York Times Book Review even appreciates the idea that "Matilda knows how to be extremely and creatively naughty" (West 92).

Indeed, no one will be exasperated with the cleverness of Matilda except her half-witted parents who look upon their daughter "as nothing more than a scab. A scab is something you have to put up with until the time comes when you can pick it off and flick it away" (Dahl, Matilda 10). When compared to her brother Michael, the treatment that Matilda receives from her parents is unfair as well as demeaning. Although Matilda had a stunningly superior learning progress to that of Michael, "[t]he parents, instead of

applauding her, called her a noisy chatterbox and told her sharply that small girls should be seen and not heard" (10-1). The ill-tempered utterance "don't butt in" comes as a natural yet contemptuous response from the parents whenever Matilda adds her comments. In a condescending tone, Mr Wormwood articulates his impatience towards his daughter, but he proves to be a caring father when his tone makes a one-hundred-and-eighty-degree switch in front of his son, the inheritor of his cycle business. The two dimensional portrayal of Mr Wormwood allows us instantly to recognize the kind of parents who show favoritism to boys.

Matilda's parents show no interest in their daughter's unusual brilliance or her power of telekinesis; their negligence inhibits this child prodigy from obtaining proper development:

> Matilda was a little late in starting school. Most children begin Primary School at five or even just before, but Matilda's parents, who weren't very concerned one way or the other about their daughter's education, had forgotten to make the proper arrangements in advance. (Dahl, Matilda 66)

The Wormwoods are more preoccupied with making money, playing bingo and watching TV than tending their children. Even when Matilda solves a tangled sum correctly, Mr Wormwood would express his disbelief by undermining the possibility with "[n]o one in the world could give the right answer like that, especially a girl" (55). The sarcasm in such an incident comes from the contrast between our shared knowledge

of Matilda's rare gift and the parents' ignorance of their daughter's talent. In Matilda, Dahl creates many comic scenes for readers in his manipulation of contrariness, say the discrepancy between the known and the unknown, the informed and the deceived[12]. The child reader, being on the side of the informed, dwells on the "slender threads"[13] woven by Dahl's bizarre yet entertaining inventions and reacts, together with the protagonists, against adults who accept a corrupt world.

In the opening chapters of the story, there are various descriptions about the unjust treatment that Matilda receives from her parents owing to her identity as a girl, yet we do not wait for long to see Matilda's struggle against the tyranny. Actually, to witness the prolonged suffering of children is almost impossible in Dahl's writings because Dahl helps reverse the adverse situation by allying himself with children in a rebellion against adults:

> Dahl puts himself in league with an implied child reader against the inevitable disgust of grown-ups. He is frequently seen as a subversive writer; if he is so, it is not because the values his stories endorse are

---

[12] For instance, in Matilda's combat against the abusive headmistress Miss Trunchbull in Crunchem Hall Primary School, Miss Trunchbull is always deceived by the child even though she appears to be "a gigantic holy terror, a fierce tyrannical monster who frighten[s] the life out of the pupils and teachers alike" (67). When we hear the oppressive Miss Trunchbull is belittled and defeated by Matilda, we rejoice at our expectations towards what Dahl has informed us earlier about Matilda's practice of telekinesis.

[13] Roald Dahl mentions "slender threads" when he refers to the plot of a story. Dahl thinks that a children's book must be woven by "slender threads", or in other words, a tightly-knit and original plot (Chevalier 256).

> subversive, but because he ranges himself, not merely, like Blyton, with children, but with children against adults. (Wall 193-4)

Here, Barbara Wall has illustrated the reason for Dahl's popularity among the young but she is only partially correct in dissecting Dahl's label as a subversive writer, for the stories of Roald Dahl contain subversive elements in their plots as in their conveyed values[14]. It is undeniable that Dahl does not explicitly adopt any feminist or subversive political viewpoints which can easily project his image as a subversive writer and this fact may lure critics like Wall to overlook Dahl's subversive values. In Dahl's works, the recurring story pattern "of adventurous autonomy in which youngsters [triumph] without adult help" (Hunt, Criticism 190) has incorporated the advocacy of children's autonomy and the upholding of a new realm attained through release from adults' manacles. In Matilda, Dahl not only raises children from their voiceless and barely visible position to an equal status to that of adults, but he also demonstrates that children are better off without the interference from grown-ups, "who are portrayed as at best silly and needlessly anxious, at worst selfish and stupid" (Lurie 9). For one thing, in attempting to confine the motions of their daughter as in the case of the Woodworms, adults may have done harm with their narrow perspectives of gender.

In Dahl's delineation, there comes the triumph of a five-year-old girl; the revolting schemes devised by Matilda against her unbearable parents and the menacing

---

[14] Maybe Dahl is not conscious of imbuing subversive ideas during his writing or he will realize that he has worked against various conventional notions such as the frail female image, the presumed authority of

headmistress Miss Trunchbull constitute the main "thread" in the development of the story. Dahl, the well-known anarchist, amusingly counteracts adults' physical dominance "by showing how the child can retaliate by plotting revenge which humiliates her oppressors, her parents, yet leaving them unaware that Matilda is the cause of their misfortune" (Knowles and Malmkjær 134). Matilda refuses to be victimized and unlike precocious Albert in Carrie's War, Matilda does not lament sentimentally that being a child is "a fearful *handicap*"[15] (Bawden, Carrie's War 138). Instead, Matilda initiates bouts of gruesome attacks against her mean and mercenary parents, hence the superglue episode, the haunting room incident and the platinum blonde hair-dye episode, which have successfully undermined the authority of oppressive adults:

> Her [Matilda's] safety-valve, the thing that prevented her from going round the bend, was the fun of devising and dishing out these splendid punishments, and the lovely thing was that they seemed to work, at any rate for short periods. The father in particular became less cocky and unbearable for several days after receiving a dose of Matilda's magic medicine. (Dahl, Matilda 49)

By pulling the legs of those beastly to her, the utmost that a little girl can do, Matilda proves to be a child with inner strength and indomitable spirit even when intimidated by

---

adults as well as the societal rules which "serve the interests of the powerful rather than the interests of justice" (West 96).

[15] We admire the strength of Matilda, especially the way she deals with adults' nastiness. In the story, Dahl offers to us an assertive and uncompromising female character. Matilda is outstanding because when the other children act out their frustration in temper tantrums, Matilda knows "that neither crying nor

adults. Matilda differs from other children in her determination to right wrongs and her refusal to succumb to power. She puts aside the stereotypical framing of a female child and with her intelligence, she becomes the heroine of all children.

Dahl's predilection to strengthen little female protagonists with supernatural abilities as well as special brainpower alters the traditional image of women's physical weaknesses. The consistency of Dahl's preoccupation with powerful heroines can be seen from his two other characters, Sophie in The BFG and the narrator in The Magic Finger. In The Magic Finger, the narrator asserts her individuality by refusing to be called "a stupid little girl" and indeed she is not. The narrator in the story is capable of revenging with her Magic Finger whenever she is cross and the mysterious power becomes not just her weapon for self-defence, but also a tool for her to punish the prejudiced. Dahl's modeling of strong and competent female figures is celebratory because he provides us with positive representations of females against the belittled and submissive little girls appearing in previous didactic writings[16].

Matilda is hailed as a superheroine on account of her power to attack; however, the Wormwoods think that a brilliant little daughter is nauseating. The mother forthrightly asserts her standpoint:

---

sulking ever got anyone anywhere. The only sensible thing to do when you are attacked is, as Napoleon once said, to counter-attack" (41).

[16] Aside from many didactic writings for children, there are also some popular children's stories created with a world of gender inequalities. It is only in recent times that female characters occupy active roles in modern fiction for children. For instance, "Ursula K. Le Guin has been particularly successful in creating fantasy worlds where women are numerous, active and powerful characters" (Goodman 17). Yet, in Matilda, we can also discover figures like Miss Honey who is "always shy and retiring", as she tells Matilda, "You must understand I was never a strong character like you" (198).

> I'm not in favour of blue-stocking girls. A girl should think about making herself look attractive so she can get a good husband later on. Looks is more important than books. . . . A girl doesn't get a man by being brainy (Dahl, Matilda 97-99)

The rhyme of "books" and "looks" stresses the different yearnings of Matilda and her mother in a verbally funny way. To the dismay of the Woodworms, Matilda exhibits more interest in intellectual pursuits than in her appearance. Without conforming to the stereotyped sex role, Matilda's confidence in her self-worth urges her to act like the other assertive children in Dahl's stories: eventually they "bounce back and revenge themselves humorously against their oppressors" (West 92).

Subversive Humor

Although Dahl would not admit it openly, many critics like Barbara Wall, Mark I. West and Peter Hunt would have considered him to be a subversive children's writer[17]. Dahl, with a passion for humourous books, clarifies his role as a pleasure carrier instead of a sermon preacher. He aims at overwhelming children with the maximum pleasure that his works can handle: "My only purpose in writing books for children," he said, "is to encourage them to develop a love of books. I'm not trying to indoctrinate them in any way. I'm trying to entertain them" (West 97). Dahl's works, in ever-hilarious mood, have indeed conveyed ideas of subversion with overflowing pleasure from a fusion of

---

[17] Murray Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjæ r shed light on Dahl's intention of writing: "Dahl allies himself with the child reader against the world of adults, which is why many saw him as subversive. . ." (125).

fantasy and crude humor. There are many objections to Dahl's stories raised from the adults' side out of their aversion to "the grotesque and the cruel" (Knowles and Malmkjær 28) in Dahl's narration. By taking the side of children, Dahl the anarchist has been said "to subvert adult strictures by endorsing children's impulses to aggression and vengeance" (Hunt, Criticism 190). Dahl's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, with its first emergence in 1964, "has been loved by children and hated by adults because it is full of fun and virtually amoral" in accordance with the opinion of Humphrey Carpenter (Knowles and Malmkjær 125).

Aside from Dahl's stories, many subversive events occurring in subversive children's literature are comical, for instance, Jo's amusing cross-dressing, Matilda's mischievous plots against her parents or Arrietty's stumbling to freedom. While children find these subversive events appealing at first glance, adults may respond differently, hence producing divergent reception of humor in children's reading. As Julia Eccleshare points out, adults are ambivalent to irreverent jokes applied to enrich children's books, because they are fairly certain that "children themselves are quite inventive enough in this field without reading books to reinforce a stage which most parents hope will be shortlived" (57). John Rowe Townsend remarks elsewhere that children, in opposition to the will of adults, "are crudely vital and often vulgar creatures who will rebel, rightly, against the over-refined and ladylike" (Written 255). Not surprisingly, literary history reflected that during the first half of the nineteenth century, fairy tales were once deemed

"too pleasurable and entertaining" for children to read because they were "not instructive and pious enough for young souls" (Zipes 98).

It is understandable that adults frequently worry about the influence of subversive humor in children's writings. In order to stabilize the existing hierarchy, adults tend to rule out ludicrous possibilities that may challenge their status; they alarmingly anticipate the time of carnival that may somehow express "liberation from fear and authority, from power and prohibition" (McGillis, ALP 85). The link between descriptions of subversive events and laughter is not merely coincidental, for to witness subversion is intrinsically funny: by observing the imperfections of the potent, one finds an outlet for emotional relief, an emancipation from "the powerful and persistent grip that civilized behavior tightens around each and every one of our lives" (Sanders 9).

To be free from conventionality is relaxing; by temporarily lifting off the burden of reality, slapstick humor in children's readings offers the kind of primordial bliss that can otherwise be obtained through spontaneous actions:

> Little kids who spin madly about and finally fall, giggling all the way down to the ground, their arms and legs turning every which way, have abandoned themselves to the same giddy state. How delightful to be so out of control—so safely, so playfully out of control. (Sanders 13)

The sheer relief that one can act without constraints is found in carnival; therefore, the reverie enjoyed by children signifies the destruction of barriers or even the involvement of "travesty"—"a reversal of the hierarchic levels" (Bahktin 81).

In the field of Hong Kong children's literature, some writers may deal with the theme of gender subversion in a cautiously inventive manner and sometimes paradoxically, they both approve and disapprove the idea at the same time, hence uneasily leaving a confused picture of sex-role switching. Huang Hong-jian 黃虹堅 in her short story Man-man and Her Grandmother 《曼曼和她的嫲嫲》 describes an intelligent and independent girl who experiences a short trip alone to a community centre. On the one hand, the author carefully includes evidences of Man-man's capability of accepting challenges and focuses on her problem-tackling talent as parts of the girl's merits. On the other hand, Huang ambivalently exposes her traditional thinking that girls should preserve some feminine attributes in appearance when she makes such a comment on Man-man: "She is tall and thin and prefers to wear a track suit, whether summer or winter. With her "gamin" hair, she looks quite like a boy" (My translation (66). 她(曼曼)高高瘦瘦，不論夏天冬天都愛穿一身運動服，再加上一頭剪短的頭髮 ，看上去有幾分像男孩子。 From Huang's evaluation of her child character, it is not difficult for us to realize that some Hong Kong children's writers still feel obliged to come to terms with the conventionally gendered child model although many of them have demonstrated a tendency to break away from the underlying assumptions of gender.

Far from censuring the female's worldly extroversion, many Hong Kong children's writers scoff at the way convention straitjacketed the growth of little boys and girls. True to convention, the depiction of gender roles in Hong Kong primary school

textbooks, shown in a research by Au Kit-chun 區潔珍, conforms to the traditional notions that "males belong to the external world whereas females belong to the domestic world" (49). However, this does not mean that Hong Kong children's writers are not concerned with creating an unbiased representation of gender identities—the departure from the norm and the transformation of the unchangeable. For instance, He Zi displays much sympathy for his little female characters; his revelation of their inner psychology tends to suggest their yearnings for a boundless world, as displayed in a title like "I Want to Fly" 《我想飛》 and the idyllic setting of the story. In the Chinese sample chosen for the current study, we can observe how Hong Kong children's writer like Zhou Mi-mi takes a step out to mock the convention of gender roles, thus conveying an unambiguous attitude towards the competence of a female child.

The Little Princess with a Magical Face —A Chinese version of Alice's adventures

Zhou Mi-mi's周蜜蜜 The Little Princess with a Magical Face 《神面小公主》 is perhaps a novelty in HK children's literature striving for a critical representation of the existing gender orderings. The distribution ratio of female to male characters in the story varies tremendously from the traditional high frequency of male occurrences in HK children's textbooks[18]. In this short novel, we not only have a mighty female heroine but also her female friends who engage in many more activities than the only named boy. While we are anticipating a bespectacled female teacher to appear in the

[18] The data used here is obtained from Au Kit-chun's report about gender roles in Hong Kong primary school textbooks, published in 1992. Because a similar kind of quantitative research on children's

story, we encounter an old male character in the teaching post, hence reacting against the often-cited example of female primary school teachers[19]. Zhou has successfully rearranged the treatment of the two genders in order to portray a female-oriented quest story and to revolutionize some of our unchallenged assumptions regarding the notion of gender.

The Little Princess with a Magical Face imitates the *bildungsroman* plot structure and follows the discernible "home-away-home pattern" (May 41); however, central to the development of the story is a heroine who overcomes many trials in an alien and strange environment. Alice, the little princess in Zhou's story, executes her plan to experience the outside world out of her own determination and like Carroll's little Alice, the princess exposes adults' follies through her innocent eyes. The adventure of the little princess, under Zhou's deliberate intent to subvert the traditional story pattern, is an altered version of the conventional heroic quest. Joseph Campell's synopsis of the heroic quest reveals how a "hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man" (West, "Dorothys" 125). Such a pattern in Zhou's work turns out to be a heroine's journey away from the security in her supernatural

---

literature has not been done, the actual distribution of male and female characters in HK children's fiction or other genres in this literary field cannot be offered.

world to prove her power, thus a reversed adventure from "a region of supernatural wonder" to the grim reality and her return after helping the weak in the real world. The conventional hero may be driven to his adventure by the boredom in his mundane world but the little princess embarks on her journey out of her bona fide concern for the welfare of others, a greater mission to maximize her use of power and knowledge in the outside world. In contrast to the "sexist notion that girls should not aspire to a life beyond the home" (West, "Dorothys" 130), Zhou's Alice shatters the invisible hindrances on females with her strong heroic character and her ability to perform miracles.

In order to create a protagonist with great heroic potential, Zhou elevates the physical strength of the little princess by presenting her with a kind of supernatural power, a magical face that causes whoever kisses it to become young again instantly. the fact that the "Little princess also has a magical face, which is even more powerful than her mother's" (My translation) (Zhou, LP 4) 原來小公主也有神奇的面頰，而且比她母親的 神面還更神奇，能使人返老還童哩。 allows her to exercise a greater control over her parents and her surroundings. The girl in action is no longer a victim who fights back upon attack, but a motivator who pledges to reform the world with her magical possession: "I can help you (the queen) express your wishes for the people, or maybe, I can try my best to give them some support" (My translation) (Zhou, LP 7).

---

[19] Au suggests that there are inaccurate reflections of jobs taken by males and females in HK primary school textbooks. Some jobs that appear to be exclusively for a particular gender are taken up by another gender in reality.

我可以替你(女王)帶去問候，或許，我自己也能盡些力量幫幫他們的。By ignoring the advice of her parents, the bravely defiant little princess aspires for an alternative to the status quo:

> "Father, mother, I want to travel on this kind of liner to have a look at the world beyond the island. Can I?" Little Princess pulled the corner of her parents' clothes, demanding imperatively.
>
> "Alas, Little Princess, You're still young," replied the King.
>
> "I'm no longer small. Why don't you let me go outside and study at school. I can acquire more knowledge and work for my people when I come back," opined Little Princess.
>
> "No, the outside world does not suit us. My dear, you'd better stay on the island," the Queen shook her head in disagreement.
>
> "But, mother, you haven't had a look at the outside world. How can you be so certain that it is not suitable for us?" Little Princess objected. (My translation) (Zhou, LP 5-6)
>
> 爸爸，媽媽，我想坐上這樣的輪船，去島外面的世界看看，可以嗎？小公主用手拉拉父母的衣角，急切地要求着。
>
> 唉，小公主，你還小啊。親王說。
>
> 我不小了，為什麼不讓我到外面的學校讀書，學更多的知識，再回來為大家做事呢？小公主說出自己的主張。

外面的世界不適合我們。乖女兒，你還是好好地留在島上吧。女王搖着頭，不同意。

可是，媽媽，你還沒有到外面的世界看過，怎麼就肯定不適合我們呢？小公主說。

The different reactions between the little princess and her parents towards the outside world manifest the conflict between the parents' conservatism and the child's incentive to explore and challenge. However, the little princess is adamant about her abilities and her spirit of resistance enables her to counter oppositions from adults, thus fulfilling her wish to probe the mysteries of another world: "Goodbye, Magical Face Island. The new journey will be very mysterious, very attractive to people. I hope to arrive at Hong Island soon, to fulfil my dream of visiting the outside world" (My translation) (Zhou, LP 8). 再見了，神面島，新的航程該是多麼神秘,多麼吸引人啊，但願我能早日到達香島，快些實現遊歷外面世界的夢想!

Alice's experiences in Hong Island香島, an outgrowth of Zhou's desire to put some indigenous flavour into her work[20], form a critical stage in her identity formation. The adventure undergone by the little princess allows the girl to explore possibilities of self-expression, in particular to make decisions on her course without any adults' interventions. Starting from her rebellious suggestion to leave the isolated "Magical

[20] Zhou Mi-mi, a creator living in an urban city 都市創作人, advocates the accumulation and collection of information from one's daily life for the purpose of writing. According to Zhou, one of the four factors conducive to the creation of an urban fairy tale 都市童話 includes the injection of imaginative elements (Zhou, HK 168). In an urban fairy tale like The Little Princess with a Magical Face, Zhou has combined the bits and pieces gathered from her urban living and her idea of fantasy.

Face Island"神面島, Alice has established her own concept of the world that sets against the standard of her surrounding adults: "The Little Princess bounced gaily up and down, rejoicing that she could take part in the excursion! But she suddenly remembered that her mother had experienced something bad on Hong Island. How could it be? In such a beautiful and attractive place!" 小公主快樂地跳着,實在慶幸自己這次的旅行!但她忽然想起,母親曾經在這裏遇到不愉快的事情,那怎麼可能的呢?在這樣一個迷人的地方! (Zhou, LP 12) The taste of victory hardens Alice's resolve to redefine her role as a child and to accord values to her female identity. Certainly, Alice, being credited with inner resourcefulness, has found the way to exercise her individuality by travelling to a far-flung place and aspiring to the fulfillment of her own wishes.

The book, conveying an ostensible theme of the "generation gap" (Zhou, HK 171), illuminates how the interplay of different generations articulates strengths and weaknesses of each individual presented in the story. While on the one hand the parents are shown to be in control of the Edenic "Magical Face Island", they are weak in moving ahead to conquer challenges: the fear of change that usually exists among those in power. Their reluctance to progress is not so much a blessing of stability as an imprisonment by their own self-imposed restrictions. On the other hand, the child Alice exhibits a charisma of self-development and represents sarcastic comment on the relationships of domination and actual power as divulged in the story. Having enacted her subversive impulses, the little princess is the embodiment of "female power" and her "vigour has influence beyond as well as within the immediate family" (Foster and

Simons 18). Despite the fact that the little princess is young in age and raw in worldly experiences, she is an innovator who is able to bridge her dream and reality.

*

According to Alice Byrnes's interpretation of childhood in the Wordsworthian sense, childhood is "not just a time of life, but a state of being. It is that state of being that restores us to our truest selves and gifts us with virtues such as innocence, wonder, spontaneity, and freedom" (16). While some adults labour to improve their quality of life by all means, they have somehow overlooked the direct answer that is readily available from the child's perceptive remarks. For Wordsworth tells us that "The Child is Father of the Man" (209). Perhaps what children and adults require for their understanding of each other is a willingness to listen with sympathy to what the other party is trying to convey.

Inverted Chalkboard: School of Subversion

Teacher, come on outside!
I'll race you to the seesaw!
No, you won't fall off!
I'll show you how!
Don't be afraid, teacher.
Grab my hand and follow me.
You can learn all over again!
Albert Cullum

At school, headmasters and teachers are figures of authority; they stand on the platform in the assembly hall and they write on the chalkboard where the authorized "black and white" passes to the next generation. Yet how can students tell their teachers that there is a grey area which is just as important as the "black and white"?--and what about the "variegated"? The suggestion that teachers and parents represent the only truth in children's lives may sound a bit exaggerated, but indeed it is not difficult to find occasions when teachers spoon-feed students. Such a situation can be found in written sources reflecting what have existed in real life. Charles Dickens in Hard Times portrays a vapid classroom scene at the outset of the novel: located in a "plain, bare, monotonous vault of a school room", a speaker announces his philosophy of education in an "inflexible, dry and dictatorial" voice. School, according to the character Mr Gradgrind, is a place where children "have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they [are] full to the brim" (48). To the surprise of Mr Gradgrind, fantasy cannot be suppressed. The eagerness to have fun and the impulse to stir up mischief is always there among children, despite the constricted rules and regulations laid down by the school: "[t]he clash between authority and the individual is the stuff of a great deal of

drama, and for young people the school is an ideal setting in which to show it" (Townsend 112).

Nowadays, children's writers are keen on demonstrating the humorous aspects of school life. Sheila Ray in her discussion of school stories sheds light on the entertainment value provided by the perfect setting of the genre:

> A school story offers a setting in which young people are thrown together and in which relationships between older and younger children, between members of the peer group and between children and adults can be explored. Events and relationships can be imbued with an air of excitement and the possibilities for humour are never far away. (348)

Popular children's writer Roald Dahl, in the narration of his childhood, refers to the blurred reminiscences of his school life as nothing but tremendous fun: "Great excitement is probably the only thing that really interests a six-year-old boy and it sticks in his mind" (BOY 24).

Among various melodramatic fragments featured in children's stories, the first day of starting school is one of the recurrent episodes often captured with vividness by writers. In Carrie's War, Nina Bawden depicts the days when Carrie attends the village school during the war period. There is also Michelle Magorian and her portrayal of Willie at school in Goodnight Mister Tom. Roald Dahl describes the scene when Matilda displays her versatility at Crunchem Hall Primary School where the sadistic headmistress, Miss Trunchbull, practises her eccentricities. In Jean Webster's Daddy-

Long-Legs, Joshua recounts her exciting school life in detail and of course there are many more school-related incidents interestingly narrated elsewhere. According to the psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim, the first day of school "adds a new dimension" to the child's life. Upon the transition from a familiar situation to a brand new environment, "the child has to cope entirely on his own—usually for the first time—with a world quite different from that of his family, home, and friends, all he has known until now" (Bettelheim 3). Since the opportunity of staying at school is an almost commonly shared experience among children, the excitements, adventures and delights undergone at this stage provide immediately available materials for writers to work with in order to create. As recalled by John Rowe Townsend, in "England as elsewhere, school appears in fiction as part of the patterns of daily life" and owing to the long duration that children spent at school, "school is a world in which personal politics are always in full swing" (Written 111).

In this chapter, I shall examine two samples of school stories from Western children's literature and one example from Hong Kong children's works. Once again, the theme of gender subversion is my focus of study and I shall let you know how the mavericks in class turn away from the conventional concepts with their mutinous voices and actions. Mr Cartright, the teacher of form 4C in Anne Fine's Flour Babies, laments his bad luck to stand up to a "pack of sociopaths" (16), to preach "over the waves of bad-tempered muttering" (1) and to endure any "small gesture of defiance" (19). The offended teacher never realizes that amid the chaos, there exists Simon Martin, one of

the hooligans in class, who exhibits attributes of love and care out of his genuine affection for the flour baby. Attempts to define notions of masculinity and femininity based on the intensity of emotional displays no longer effectively outline a hero or heroine, as a boy like Simon may let his stoicism give way to his intuitive feelings and interests.

Flour Babies (1992) —Let chaos reign.

In a lighthearted comedic fashion, Anne Fine's Flour Babies scoffs at the masculine convention that determines little boys' presumed roles and expressions of feelings. Kimberley Reynolds quotes Ruskin's lecture "Of Queen's Gardens" to tell us that for a long period of time in Britain, man is advised to be "active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender. His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energies for adventures, for war, and for conquest" (50). In opposition to the traditional models of masculinity, the fictional boy Simon emerges in Fine's story with an explorative spirit in emotions and relationships instead of displaying physical strength in an adventure.

Set in a boy's school, the book's teachers and students alike have an aversion to the subjects of housekeeping or child development; however, Simon Martin, beyond the expectations of his peers, demonstrates a gush of emotions while participating in the flour babies experiment. The flour babies experiment is a school science project designed for students to study a child's growth. Each student has to take care of a bag of flour for three whole weeks in order to learn about the tasks of being a parent. The

troubles with the boys are their entrenched ideas that housework and baby-sitting belong to "girls' stuff". As they protest uneasily, "Girls' things, that's what they are" (Fine 6). Even Mr Cartright sides with the boys and considers the flour babies experiment an improper science invented by the disgusting Dr Feltham as a "great big *cheat*" (Fine 12). While the boys conceive domestic economy in terms of "Wendy Houses", Mr Cartright cannot help agreeing unanimously: "for the life of him, he couldn't think what else domestic economy might be about, except stuff that any halfwit could look out for himself in a fortnight" (Fine 23). Fine explains to us that domestic economy is more than what Mr Cartright takes it to be and the rigid demarcation of male and female roles has unjustifiably delimited people's shared experiences. By tracing the development of the child Simon, Fine highlights the significance of the flour babies experiment, which serves as a climatic change in Simon's perception of the parent-child relationship as well as a stimulus for Simon to evaluate his substantial identity as an independent individual.

Unlike the other boys and his teacher Mr Cartright who hate the idea of baby-sitting, Simon responds with a determination to subvert the archaic association of female and nursery. As the story progresses, we witness how Simon deluges his flour baby with love and how his tenderness rivals that of a female:

> He [Simon] often found himself chatting to her [the flour baby] companionably. "Comfy?" he'd ask, as he propped her on top of the rest of the stuff in his book bag. "Happy?" as he lifted her to the top of the wardrobe. . . . (Fine 74)

If the society did not restrict the roles of males and females, probably tender Simon would represent an archetypal "motherly" figure by being very protective towards his baby infant: "He'd really grown to love his flour baby. He'd really cared about her" (Fine 153). Akin to an experienced mother, Simon brings out his intrinsic potential to nurture his child and even experiments with a number of ways to attend to his flour baby: chatting, cuddling or rocking her as if she is a real child of his own. The scene of "someone the size of a gorilla" (Fine 74) singing lullabies to a six-pound bag of flour, though dramatically funny, has introduced a harmonious state of androgyny exemplified in Simon's incarnation of a fatherly mother or a motherly father. Simon and his unanticipated "feminine" acts alter the presentation of aggressive male protagonists in children's literature and thus put our conventional practices of sex role stereotyping under the light of skepticism. Shirley B. Ernst, in her writing about gender issues in books for children, said that "[g]irls were generally relegated to the background as nurturers, supporters, whiners, or weak-kneed whinnies who depended on men for guidance and salvation" (67). However, Simon in Flour Babies challenges the labels which are reserved for girls and discloses the necessity to examine male characters "with a whole new respect, a far greater interest" (Fine 32).

By defying adults' rules at school and being reactionary to stereotypical views of males, the child protagonist in Flour Babies not only takes away the gender tag glued on him, but also earns his way to get rid of all the binding forces in life. Just like the other

teenagers portrayed in Anne Fine's writings, young Simon in his adolescent emotions can only bear his surrounding adults with little patience[1]:

> Strange, he [Simon] was thinking, how parents, like teachers, could keep up the nagging for years and years about tin-pot things like saying thank you and goodbye. He didn't know how they did it. He'd go unhinged within a week. (Fine 109-110)
>
> He [Simon] was struck by the sheer grit of teachers. Their stout hearts. Their unflagging fixity of purpose. Determinedly they bashed on, term after term, trying to make their pupils give of their very best. (Fine 60)

The ensuing battle between Simon and the unsympathetic Mr Cartright hastens the mental growth of the boy, who has never extinguished his passion to pursue his will. The liberty to opt for what one desires most is, perhaps, a life-long struggle for everyone in his transitional process to adulthood, for Tracy Chevalier records Anne Fine's comments:

> Growing through to full autonomy is, for anyone, a long and doggy business; for some, more sabotaged than others by their nature or upbringing, it can seem impossible. I try to show that the battle through the chaos and confusion is worthwhile and can, at times, be seen as very funny. (336)

---

[1] More examples can be found on pages 38 and 85 in Fine's work.

In Flour Babies, Fine jerks us along the mental development of the child protagonist Simon with her entertaining illustrations, while at the same time inviting us to contemplate on the implication of one's acquired identity.

Essentially a book for fun and for meditation, Flour Babies does not allow us to escape the scenario without asking ourselves a question or two:

> Anne Fine's books are a true delight to read. She has an extraordinary ability to pitch them at just the right level and she can put across a serious point while at the same time making a joke of it. Every story skilfully combines humour with a deep understanding of the situation portrayed in a straightforward manner. (Hobson and Madden 76)

Fine's story, with its backdrop of daily school events, appeals to children with instant familiarity, hence provoking laughter at the commonplace and inviting introspection into matters of concern to young people. Fine does not patronize her readers with a playful stance or less serious tone; instead, she raises philosophical issues about one's existence underneath the disguise of humour. When the character Simon thinks of a parent's roles and duties, the ironic metaphor of a "life sentence" comes to the forefront:

> Now there was a *real* job, thought Simon. Twenty-four hour shifts. Every day. For twenty years. No breaks. No holidays. It made one of Hyacinth's parties look like a mayfly's quick blink. Being a parent was pretty well a life sentence. Why, if instead of going off to hospital to have a baby all those years ago, his mother had stabbed someone to death

> with a bread knife, she'd be out of gaol by now. Twice over, probably, if she'd been good. (Fine 149)

In contrast to what Simon thinks, his own experience with his flour baby testifies that being one's parent can also be an enjoyable and invaluable time within one's life. In this connection, Simon's overstated metaphor turns into a point of departure for little readers to contemplate.

The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler (1977) —Ideas and imagination are what matter.

"Growing up" for Tyke Tiler in the story by Gene Kemp seems "a grotty sort of thing to have to do" (116) and more importantly, the process signifies the separation from friends at school. The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler farcically portrays the last term of Tyke at Cricklepit Combined School. The experience of teaching at school enables Gene Kemp to go deep into the psyche of children and reflect to the full the ways children deal with repressive school rules. To the surprise of readers, Kemp brings us to a dramatic revelation of Tyke's gender at the end of the story—an almost unquestionably perceived "he" in our first reading turns out to be a heroine in an unexpected twist. It is not until Mrs Somers yells out in a gush of anger, "Theodora Tiler, you naughty, disobedient girl" (Kemp 119), that we realize the "disobedient, under-educated, under-disciplined, loud-mouthed ruffian" (Kemp 30) is indeed a female! The subversion of gender in Kemp's story operates on a twofold manner: on the first level, Tyke subverts the idealized feminine image upheld by her surrounding adults; on

another level, Tyke challenges readers' perception of sex roles by upsetting their beliefs in the socially-constructed sexual differences.

The plot structure of a boy fooling around on campus, with its first occurrence in Tom Brown's Schooldays (1857) by Thomas Hughes (Townsend, Written 112), comes out as a standard formula designed for school stories. Yet Kemp in an ingenious way revolutionizes such a popular narration by replacing the boy protagonist with a female troublemaker. Kemp does not simply create a tomboy, but a rigorous force to demolish the boundary between male and female cultures. As Kimberley Reynolds tells us, Kemp's work "highlights the existence of conventions which perpetuate notions of sexual difference originating in the last century" (155) through the technique of "foregrounding". By placing to the forefront conventional expectations of gender roles, Tyke's autonomous behaviour helps alter our perceptions of females with a sudden awakening. The realization that there are many unjustified assumptions about differences between males and females justifies Kemp's effort to attain a world of equality by amending the stereotype of gender images, "in particular gentlemanliness for the boys and domesticity for the girls" (Butts 2).

The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler is divided into two halves in terms of narration, with the first person narrative constituting the first half of the story and the third person narrative looking retrospectively at the disastrous consequences caused by Tyke's rebellious act, the tolling of the old bell which shatters the whole tower at school. This device allows Tyke to temporarily suspend her feminine identity until the final

pages of the story, when the third person narrative chimes in. As a result, Tyke's gender subversion is a more powerful subversion when compared to the other characters' discussed earlier in the current study. If Tyke's gender were disclosed at the beginning of the novella, our perception of Tyke's behaviour would be very much different. Now from the first half of the narrative, we can only visualize a little child in mucky T-shirt and trousers, yelling and climbing up and down:

> As Dad came in I (Tyke) jumped on him from behind the door.
>
> "You crazy fool. Are you trying to flatten me?"
>
> We wrestled in the hall.
>
> "Submit," he said. I submitted.

A vivid portrayal of a naughty son is in sight simply from this episode. Without querying the possibility that Tyke may be a girl, we acknowledge from our normal experiences that Tyke is a boy owing to her obviously crude manner and her independent movement. The author makes fun of our expectation of Tyke's gender based on the masculine image created by the character. Indeed, Gene Kemp has successfully criticized our superficial perception of a person and questioned acutely the existing assumptions about gender.

The Devilish Guan-guan《魔女管管》(1993) —The Conjurer of Humour in Class

Tyke Tiler has a Chinese counterpart. Guan-guan管管, the female protagonist created by Pang Jing-ying潘金英 and her sister Ming-zhu明珠, practises mischief at school and appears like a horrendous nightmare haunting teachers with her

uncooperative performances, such as drawing funny pictures on the board or spoiling lessons with her unwelcome interruptions:

> Guan-guan did not observe rules in class. In fact, she liked making jokes to entertain her classmates. Sometimes when the teacher had not yet arrived at the classroom, she would stride to the platform, pick up the chalk and draw－draw a tortoise! Guan-guan would also chew bubble gum during lessons, but her thunderous chatting and laughing were the most disgusting. She vied with her classmates to answer the questions raised by teachers, yet her replies are often nonsensical, hence destroying the serious learning atmosphere in class. Really troublesome! (My translation) (Pang 18)
>
> 管管上課不愛守秩序，最喜歡講笑話逗同學笑，有時還趁老師尚未來到課室，大步走到講壇前，拿起粉筆便畫--畫烏龜哩。 管管又會在上課時嚼吹波糖，而最討人厭的，是她常常大聲說笑和搶答問題，答問題時又往往胡謅一番，惹得大家無法專心上課，真難纏！

Disobedience, if triggered, spreads like an infectious disease and so teachers are anxious to put the child back on the right track, particularly because Guan-guan is a clever girl. The teachers all expect the girl to restrain her behaviour under their manipulations but Guan-guan just attests to what is mentioned by Nina Bawden: "Children don't always feel what adults expect them to feel, nor see what adults expect them to see. They inhabit the same world but they look at it so differently" ("A Dead Pig" 4).

Guan-guan defiantly acts against her compliant predecessors such as Ah Mei 阿媚and Siu Mui小梅 in He Zi's short stories (He Zi, Prejudice 74-80; Married 79-84), in order to seek for her own self-expression. In the case of Ah Mei, the impact of her father's job insecurity first falls on her, yet she has no power to overcome the adverse circumstance. Inevitably, Ah Mei has to quit school and work as a hawker. No matter how much she dislikes the arrangement, she submits to it. Ah Mei never implores nor blames, concealing her own requests behind the screen of seemingly selfless sacrifice. He Zi glorifies the girl because of her perseverance in the sense that she submits to the adults' will by ignoring her own. However, the writer never knows that he has imposed his moral standard on the story with an influence on the little readers' perception of themselves.

He's stories produce model Chinese girls who cry over their own misfortunes but seldom react against them, or are simply too weak to defend themselves from their predicaments. Their ultimate submission, *fortunately*, is rewarded with adults' appreciation. Siu Mui's condition is more or less the same as Ah Mei's. Her passivity prevents her from making her own decision. I am glad to see that in Pang's story, there is a breakthrough in the narration of the little female character[2]. Guan-guan represents the self-styled icon of

---

[2] He's stories, covering the time frame from the sixties to the seventies, feature the working daughters in Hong Kong during the economically difficult time of the early colony:

> . . . many girls were required to work in their young age, such as at age 11 or 12, in order to support their families in the sixties and seventies. In many cases, the income they made was used to finance the education of their older or younger brothers. Into the

rebellion from the side of the "little people" whereas the teacher is the upholder of the status quo maintained by the authority of the bigger ones. The dichotomy of the young and the old constitutes the source of misunderstanding which builds up the main development of the story; the tension, however, terminates with a compromise between the two parties. The Pang sisters have exposed the recognizable meanness in adults while at the same time, enabling a vulnerable child to undermine the dictatorial rule of the grown-ups.

Depressed by the drabness of school life, Guan-guan makes up jokes to entertain the class during lessons, hence exposing a prominent image of a troublemaker. It is understandable why the girl has to do so; being unable to be serious for long and impervious to exhortations, Guan-guan opts for her personal satisfaction more than the so-called feminine virtues. The authors, with an aim of creating a gender-free character with unbridled behaviour, provide their female protagonist with a neutral name which suits neither boy nor girl. The name Guan-guan implies someone who takes the initiative to play a dominant role, as the word "Guan" in Chinese means "to control"管理，掌管 or "to motivate"管束，看管. In addition, the Chinese character "管" can be broken down into different parts to suggest an active and talkative person; indeed:

---

eighties and nineties, given economic development and decrease in family size, both girls and boys were expected to perform in school, at work and in the community, at least based on socially constructed ideology. (Pun 9)

For this reason, the breakthrough in Pang's narration marks a period of social and economic changes that result in people's variation of their expectations of gender roles and identities.

> The classmates commented that her name was strange. The name (管管) was constituted by several discrete words: there were two pieces of bamboo sticks (竹) and four mouths (口). The two pieces of sticks had better be used to make a broom and the four mouths could chant the magical charm continuously－Guan-guan suddenly became a witch riding on a broomstick and flew away from the window of the classroom－leaving the teacher at her wit's end. (My translation) (Pang 18)
>
> 班裡的同學都說她的名字怪，拆開筆畫細看--哈，有兩根竹桿和四張嘴巴;那兩根竹桿最好用來做一把掃帚`四張嘴可以頻密地唸着咒語嗎哩嗎哩噢`洋葱加生葱--管管搖身變作騎掃帚的小女巫，由課室的窗口飛出去－老師也束手無策哩。

Guan-guan, also dubbed as "the little witch"小魔女 (Pang 21), is apparently not presented as an attractive girl with lovely character; she also lacks those traditionally recommended female qualities of docility and reticence. Without acquiring the gentle disposition of a willowy, shy young girl, Guan-guan is marvelously alive with the zest of creation. Yet this creative vigour has inappropriately turned her into a pest in the view of her teachers.

The Pang sisters shed light on Guan-guan's cleverness as well as her bravery to act alone, yet both virtues are seldom attributed to female protagonists in Hong Kong children's writings. Unlike the examples taken from Ah Lung or He Zi's short stories,

Guan-guan is a deviant from the legacy of traditional female models. The "little witch" is the migraine of adults and worse still, a nuisance to her peers:

> Those classmates who had sat with her (Guan-guan) before changed from one to the other. Now no one was willing to sit together with her because everyone considered her an annoyance. All of them had complained to the teacher. Ms Poon recognized that Guan-guan always disturbed others, so she decided to "exile" her (Guan-guan) to the seat beside the window, leaving her alone with no classmates next to her. (My translation) (Pang 18-9)
>
> 以前跟她一起坐的同學,換了一個又一個,現在沒有人跟她一塊兒坐了,因為大家都嫌她煩人,都向潘老師投訴去了。 潘老師認為管管總愛騷擾別人,便決定把她放逐到這個窗邊的座位,獨個兒,沒有鄰座同學的。

The solitude and exile does not discourage Guan-guan from juggling with her wacky ideas in class. The isolation, when compared with the frustration and failure derived from submissiveness, creates an exclusive arena for her to unleash her imagination. In her meditation, the odd girl out reveals her ultimate wish that "she just wants them (her classmates) to enjoy their lessons gaily" (Pang 19). 她不過想令大家快快樂樂地上課吧了,為什麼同學都不明白她？ Although the other people trivialize her effort to have fun, the undefeated girl advances like a tough warrior who persistently fights for what she deems right. The authors care much to present Guan-guan as an anti-heroine whose

strong sense of individuality enables her to defy authority and do things that others don't have the courage to do in class.

The conflict between the teacher and the troublemaker is tactically resolved by a dramatic twist that consummates the story with an anticipated comedy structure. Despite the good intention of Guan-guan, all the teachers disapprove of the child's swift response and exceptional inventive power. Adults dealing with "the little witch" long to get rid of the ominous feelings conveyed by the girl. Their feelings are similar to what is experienced by the parents of Matilda, Dahl's eponymous heroine:

> Mr and Mrs Wormwood looked forward enormously to the time when they could pick their little daughter off and flick her away, preferably into the next country or even further than that. (Dahl, Matilda 10)

Although Guan-guan's class-mistress, Ms Poon, initially regards the overactive girl as a "noisy chatterbox", her adverse attitude towards the girl only sustains over a short period until she discovers from her own daughter the secret underlying her pupil's rebellion. The confrontation between the fictional characters finally ends with the teacher's awakening from her ignorance of the simple wisdom imparted by the child. The reversal of situation emerges as the teacher realizes that for the child, "perhaps (you feel that) to be an interesting person is more important than answering questions correctly" (Pang 22). 也許你覺得做個有趣的人,比答對問題更重要. . . . Being a grown-up, the teacher snuffs out the child's passion left within her. However, the child, being endowed with her straightforward logic to interpret the world, can easily overcome the adult's

convoluted reasoning and can invoke her impulse for instinctual gratification. Pangs' story not only shows us the triumph of a vulnerable female child, but also the way the child provokes intelligent thinking.

For children, problems in life can often be resolved with belly laughs but for adults, life is serious and what they consider to be meaningful may become their burdens. Carpe diem is the child's early philosophy of life. As Julia Eccleshare tells us, "[h]umour plays a large part in children's lives. They laugh a lot, they clown about" (55)[3]. In the story, the open revolt by Guan-guan against the rules in class restores a new kind of order governed by the maximum pleasure: "This is a wonderful day. Lessons are fun and the classmates also appreciate her humour. Guan-guan is joyful" (My translation) (Pang 24). 這真是個奇妙的日子!上課好玩,同學也欣賞她的笑料,管管覺得很快活哩。

*

The analyses of the three characters, Simon Martin, Tyke Tiler and Guan-guan, in this chapter manifest an interesting phenomenon. While the boy Simon displays his instinctive care towards his flour baby, the girls Tyke and Guan-guan flout the conventional feminine identities to represent their extrovert personalities. All three children are subversive when they deal with the limitations placed on their gender roles.

---

[3] Pleasure and playfulness are essential elements used to capture a child's attention. Writers can make images of the commonplace afresh with comical expressions for children. Bernice E. Cullinan sheds light on the fact that children love to laugh and will find plenty of cause for deep chuckles in their books. Authors create humour through exaggeration, slapstick, and incongruity and portray silly characters who blatantly disregard normal behaviour (169).

Their examples spur the other children to examine their gender identities and to look introspectively at any possibilities of demolishing the regimented world. The appearance of fictional children like Simon, Tyke and Guan-guan conveys their creators' elevated mission of working in line with the perceptions of the young.

As children's writers begin to know more about their little readers, they are more willing to create characters which cater to the child's needs but in turn fall short of the adult's standard. The impulses to serve children in respect of their needs and to see them as adults' equals urge children's writer Aidan Chambers to assert his stance: "Equally, whatever else may be true of the people we will be talking about—adults and children—we are the same in one fundamental and overridingly important way. We are all human beings" (Booktalk 2). Eleanor Cameron, the well-known children's author and critic of children's books, refuses to adopt a patronizing or condescending attitude while addressing her child readers:

> Surely if a writer respects himself and his craft, if he respects the idea of "child"—that creature of swift perceptions, eager imaginings, the devastating stare, the continually searching intelligence—how can there possibly be any question of writing down?" (Wall 14).

Conclusion: A New Chapter

As a serious academic study of much concern to scholars and book critics in our recent decades, children's literature in both western and indigenous contexts becomes a noted literary field encompassing a wide range of possibilities for the publishers. Many storybooks are now published with recommendations by all sorts of "experts": child psychologists, schoolteachers, librarians, or child counsellors. All these people are eager to spout forth at length on their understanding of children, yet ironically the experts often overlook the fact that the young want to be treated as capable individuals and gain respect for their choices of books. After all, reading literature is to taste the private pleasure of words and to digest the wonder of inventive imagination delivered by writers; book editor Allan Luke suggests that: "reading is posited as an autodidactic, solipsistic act, a means for engaging imaginary possible worlds in psychic privacy and intimacy" (viii).

In connection with the selection of books, my study reveals that children in Hong Kong confront greater constraints than their Western counterparts. This is not only because the development of Hong Kong children's literature has a relatively short history, but also because many Hong Kong children's writings embody lessons for little readers at the expense of artistic value[1]. When compared to children in the West, children in Hong Kong are generally considered to be less creative and less open in

[1] The fact that most of the Hong Kong children's writers are teachers may have affected their styles of writing. Children's writers who are full-time teachers include Ah Lung, He Zi, Pang Jin-ying and Elaine Sung. See appendix I for the biographical notes on some Hong Kong children's writers.

expressing themselves because in Hong Kong, "[m]any teachers still prefer to promote conformity rather than challenge children to be innovative" (SCMP 11 Aug 1998: 15). Children rebelling against adults sounds like a taboo subject to be depicted in Hong Kong children's literature, as does the celebration of children's triumphs over the authority. Although I can manage to extract a few examples of subversive characters from HK children's literature for my analysis, there are abundant examples of gender-role stereotyping occurring in local children's writing. From a report of Ming Pao Daily dated 31 August 1997, we are told that many Hong Kong children's authors have tried to modify their narrative motifs to accommodate demands of the "real consumers" in the market:

> Much text publishing is not aimed at the needs of students as consumers *per se*, but rather is designed to impress and meet the criteria of those who select educational texts on behalf of students—teachers, principals, curriculum developers and state department personnel" (Cooper 11).

As in many aspects of a child's life, adults are the designer, the monitor and the censor of what a child reads, so Julia Briggs divulges:

> Children's books are written for a special readership but not, normally by members of that readership; both the writing and quite often the buying of them, is carried out by adult non-members on behalf of child members. (Knowles and Malmkjær 2)

Since adults see it as their task to socialise children, that is, to make the young behave in ways that are conducive to the perpetuation of the social status quo, grown-ups often try to fit a child into the pre-determined place regardless of its preference. Children's literature is generally regarded as imposing an important influence on the development and socialization of young people, thus adults have made full use of storybooks for a little audience to learn of their cultural as well as social identities.

The present study has scrutinized the subversion of gender roles and identities portrayed in selected English and Hong Kong children's literature. Comparisons and contrasts expose how subversive child protagonists like Alice, Jo March, Mary, Simon Martin, the Little Princess or Guan-guan react to their gender socialization. Within several explorative chapters, this thesis illustrates how authors with their enlivened "child's minds"[2] communicate both subversive and optimistic values to succeeding generations who embody a society's hope for the future. My ultimate goal of writing this thesis is to encourage the young to consider playing roles other than those conventionally specified for their gender, in order to let our children unleash their greatest potential lurking inside every one of them. A child's attainment of individuality and autonomy, according to the children's writings I examine, depends on how hard he/she persists in asserting his/her self-will rather than merely adopting adults' conventional ideals.

---

[2] Sheila A. Egoff remarks that writers who take childhood seriously, create with "an uncondescending playfulness, for they wrote from the child that still lingered within themselves" (27).

The conventional femininity that encourages little girls to be submissive, dependent and vulnerable once dominated our daily life as well as the imaginary world established in children's literature. In many Hong Kong children's writings, little girls weep most of the time to highlight their weaknesses, hence enabling them to seek protection from strong male protagonists. He Zi's little character Siu Ching Ching 小晶晶 cries very easily; her eyes will brim with tears for just trivial things (He, Ching Ching's Tears 《晶晶的淚水》 49). In addition, Hoi Lam海琳 also appears to be a solitary and reticent girl in the short story by the Pang Sisters (Pang, Happy New Year《新年快樂》 75). The intended readers of these stories are often directed to respect the concept of patriarchal superiority by the story's reiterated emphasis on the heroine's growth to an idealized female feebleness. However, the "entry of women to higher education, and the admission—albeit reluctant—by a male-dominated society that women needed more satisfying occupations than wifehood and motherhood all contributed to a questioning of female roles and challenges to the conventionally gendered hegemony" (Foster and Simons 6).

While some children's literature continues to uphold the societal values that little boys and girls have to pursue the designated masculine and feminine role models, subversive children's writers evoke in their reformed works an alternative view of girls' lives. Authors like Lewis Carroll, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Roald Dahl or Zhou Mi-mi replenish their heroines' childhood with courageous acts and wise decisions made by the characters themselves. Their female protagonists break the "static bonds of girlhood"

(Egoff 32) by being assertive, intelligent, capable of resolving crises and audacious in questioning the repressive role for girls. When a subversive child protagonist defies a social convention or reveals adults' follies, she "challenges not only the adults of her society but also [seem] to thumb her nose at all the "nice", polite, well-adjusted child characters who [precede] her" (Egoff 34). The highly individualized hero or heroine seeks to acquire a new dimension for self-expression. Subversive children's stories gain their ceaseless readership by forming a body of children's literature that can allow a child to articulate inner thoughts and stimulate the rightful exercise of individuality, as well as resistance.

Nowadays, more imaginative works for children emerge with the assertion that childhood is a stage for fun. Opposing the tradition that children's literature serves as an advice-offering mechanism, many children's writers relinquish the formulaic plot and the direct intervention of a moralistic authorial voice. Owing to the Romantic emphasis on naturalness, imagination and the innocence of childhood, western children's writers influenced by the Romantic Movement characterize their writings with a combination of entertainment and fantasy, "building upon the notion of a non-determined world of endless opportunity" (Foster and Simons 14). When compared to the western children's writings, Hong Kong writers still need to work away from the heavy beat of morals and didacticism so as to impress little readers with the liberated concept of childhood.

While Hong Kong children's literature is heavily guided by principles of obedience and compliance with authority, the study of Hong Kong children's literature

also exhibits sluggish progression. Such a phenomenon nullifies the boisterous claim of many educators that they are devoted to the improvement of Hong Kong children's communicative ability and inventiveness. Not surprisingly, a rather comprehensive written history of the development of Hong Kong children's literature has only emerged with the sponsorship of Hong Kong Arts Development Council in 1996.

During her stay in Hong Kong, Australian author Gillian Rubinstein expresses her view that: "[r]eading story books is a wonderful experience. It teaches vocabulary and gives an understanding of other's lives. (Sunday Young Post 17 May 1998). In addition, Bernice E. Cullinan underlines the importance of books for children to interact with the environment and to experience the conflicts of growing up: "Books become a part of children's lives and provide a basis for them to compare, share, and learn; books offer vicarious experiences for children to draw upon as they encounter new people and events in their expanding world" (153). By reading children's literature that depicts characters who subvert their gender socialization, young boys and girls can find scope for gender role redefinition by probing into the existing gender hierarchies and behavioural patterns.

A STEP TO JUMP

A TWINGE

A BIT OF THE FUN.

SWIMMING, DIVING IN THE UNFATHOMABLE DEEP

THE DEPTH OF FANTASY.

Appendix I
Biographical Notes on some HK Children's Writers

He Zi 何紫 (1938-1991) He Zi is the pseudonym of He Song-bai 何松柏, an important founder of HK children's literature. The pen name *Purple* 紫 is combined by two Chinese words this此 and silk絲, and this silk is used to tie readers' hearts. In November 1981, he was named the first president of Hong Kong Children's Arts Society. Without obtaining more than secondary school education, He Zi was a talented writer and editor of various newspapers, including a children's newspaper, Er Tong Pao兒童報. Starting from1963, he received wide acclaim from the public with his novels on HK children and youth. In 1971, he directed Children's Books Company and in 1981 he established Sunbeam Publication (HK) Ltd. 山邊社. His interest in children's literature also urged him to sponsor a student's magazine "Home for Sunlight"陽光之家, which was first released in February 1986. On 3 November 1991, He Zi died of cancer. During the year that he had the disease, he spent his ultimate period in this world to finish more than ten novels for our children. "The whole life of He Zi can be described with four beautiful Chinese characters: wen-qing, feng-xian溫情、奉獻 (warm and sacrificial)," says Zhou Zhao-xiang周兆祥 in the preface of one of He Zi's novellas, The Marriage of My Sister《姊姊出嫁》.

Ah Lung阿濃 or **Zhu Pu-sheng朱溥生** is also an ardent advocate of children's books. He has been teaching for more than 30 years and has now retired in Canada. While Zhu was studying at Grantham Institute of Education in 1954, he started creating children's stories and published them weekly in newspapers. In the mid 70s, his prose piece about education, published under the special column of "Dim Sum Collection"《點心集》, drew attention from teachers and students to his humorous and positive attitude towards life. Many students find Ah Lung their good friend and confidant, someone who gives advice without a tone of admonition. Ah Lung had been the chairman and committee member of Hong Kong Children's Arts Society, propelling the development of children's literature with his forty types of prose and fiction as well as twenty types of children's stories.

Dong Rui東瑞 or **Wong Tung-to黃東濤 (1945-)**, is the director and chief editor of Holdery Publishing Enterprises Ltd. He is also an amateur writer (started his creation in 1973) of children's literature, novels, and prose. Serving a double role as a writer and critic, Dong Rui has been frequently invited to be judge in various writing competitions since the 80s. In view of the paucity of science fiction as a genre in HK children's literature, Dong Rui pioneers the creation of this genre to satisfy the curiosity of our little readers. His recent collection of "Faltering Youth Period" series彷徨少年時系列, published under his own company, caters to the specific needs of children of age twelve or above. The effort of Dong Rui rings a bell among local children's writers about the

lack of works created for our adolescents. According to the comment given by He Zi, Dong Rui is attentive to the arrangement of intriguing plots and the multi-faceted portrayal of Hong Kong, though his stories usually tend to be rather moralistic (Zhou, 60s-90s, 101-2).

Pang Jin-ying潘金英 (1958-) and Pang Ming-zhu潘明珠 (1960-) A rare pair of sisters, who share the same interest in children's literature, collaborated in writing with the pen name "Wise"英明. The Pang Sisters write from the perspective of a child, as in Miraculous Jeans《神奇牛仔褲》 and Dear Nut《寶貝合桃》. Pang Jin-ying graduated from the HK Northcote Institute of Education, and is now a secondary school teacher whereas her sister Ming-zhu completed her degree in the Department of Languages at the HK Polytechnic. In 1976, the Pang Sisters jointly participated in a writing competition organized by the magazine Breakthrough, hence gaining recognition with their first prize novel A Mouse in a Cage《籠中鼠》. Their stories combine reality and fantasy, merge the genres of life's stories and fairy tales, vividly reflecting the problems of children during their process of growing up. Stories created by the Pang Sisters are mostly established in the setting of Hong Kong, so they can provide a sense of familiarity to children living in this environment. Dong Rui once mentioned that the Pangs' stories had a strong "Hong Kong flavor"[港味] (Zhou 163).

Sung Yee-shui Elaine宋詒瑞, is a writer of children's literature and also a mandarin tutor at the City University of Hong Kong. Sung graduated from the Department of Oriental Language at Peking University and she immigrated to Hong Kong in 1981. In 1982 and 1986, she was awarded first prizes in children's stories writing competitions organized by the Urban Council. In 1983 and 1987, she obtained winning prizes from similar competitions. Her first children's novel The New Classmate《新來的同學》 was published in 1985. In Sung's stories, we can usually discover the depiction of school life and family, enriched with a meaningful theme and formal writing style.

Appendix II
Newspaper Cuttings

1. "The Death of He Zi: The Mourning". Hong Kong Writers Monthly. 15.11.91.

2. "Mourning Mr He Zi". Hong Kong Writers Monthly. 15.11.91.

3. "When a Princess Grows up: Rachel Morris Rereads the Books of her Childhood". The Times. 21.3.97.

4. "A New Chapter on the Exchange of Children's Literature". Hong Kong Writers Monthly. 1.8.97.

5. "Projecting Children's Myth－Mourning Children's Literature". Ming Pao Daily. 31.8.97.

6. "To Talk about Children's Literature Again". Hong Kong Daily News Magpaper. 12.9.97.

7. "A Grand Meeting on International Children's Literature－The Trip to Seoul". Hong Kong Writers Monthly. 1.10.97.

8. "Publishing Business for Children's Works Shooting up－Nationwide Publishing System Established". People's Daily. 6.10.97.

9. "Books Open Young Minds". Sunday Young Post. 17.5.98.

10. "Children's Publisher Blyton in Asia Drive". South China Morning Post. 8.6.98.

11. "Winnie the Pooh Dons a Toga". South China Morning Post. 4.7.98.

12. "Bear's Back in Town". South China Morning Post. 17.7.98.

13. "Young Cast Waltzes on with Roald Dahl's Matilda". South China Morning Post. 17.7.98.

14. "It Takes Maturity to Write for Children". South China Morning Post. 25.7.98.

15. "Authors Take on the 'Big Issues'". South China Morning Post. 25.7.98.

1991 年 11 月 13

何紫帶着豐盛的生命去了

■ 阿　濃

何紫去了，讓我們看得更清楚，他算的部筆大賬，其實不是金錢的賬。假如他還賺了一點錢的話，那是他精打細算出賣個人的心血和腦力所得。山邊社職員很少，何紫一人可頂十人，他賺的其實主要是自己的一份工資。他的部筆大賬是文化事業的賬，不論是<海芳書列>還是<陽光之家>，都是香港健康文化的財富，他在讀者心中播下的美善的種子，其影響更是難以估計。

我不會寫挽聯，爲了悼念我的這位作家兼生意人好友，好不容易才湊成了一副：

山邊播芳馥郁長留學府
海角送陽光在心間

何紫元雖然去得太早了一點，他却是帶着豐盛的生命去的，這一點，或許可以稍減我們悲痛之情吧。

中國作家協會上海分會

香港作家聯誼会

驚悉何紫先生病逝，十分哀痛。這是兒童文學界的損失，更是港澳兒童文學交流工作的損失。何紫先生为兒童文學事业不辞辛劳，鞠躬盡瘁，为中华儿女少年出版事業，为兒童文學中文作家团结工作，都有重大建树。何先生的業绩为我们做佩。我们謹致哀悼，并向先生的家属致以親切的慰问。

上海市作家协会兒童文學委员会

深深的悼念

■ 宋詒瑞

與病魔鬥爭，吉吉掙扎了整整一年，何紫還是離去了。

兒童文藝協會的老會長，作家好書家之一，又是成千上萬小讀者知心人。何紫，他的病情一開始就牽着多少顆心，多少朋友在爲他祝禱上天啊，幫助他度過難關創造奇吧，保佑這位大好人吧！

噩耗傳來，聞者無不痛心：天妒英才，英才早逝，確切點說，他是文學、尤是爲兒童文學事業而奔波生，積勞成疾，以致堵下去的。

何紫，是香港兒童文學事業的先驅人。他於六十年代開始就爲兒童作故事，編兒童報刊，自費結集出作品，八十年代初自建山邊社，多少年出版讀物，並發起組織了香港童文藝協會，團結了一大批兒童文工作者爲繁榮本港的兒童文藝工作出力。他還熱心致力於推動中國內與港澳台之間的兒童文學交流，合出版圖書，邀請內地兒童文學家來訪問等等，做了不少工作。他是個名的大忙人，出版社的工作自上而樣樣親力親爲，所出版的六百多種書中，半數以上是他自己著述或編的，並要負責宣傳及推廣、銷售，作量可想而知了。

悼念何紫先生

作聯副會長

香港作家聯誼會副會長何紫，因患肝癌不幸於1991年9月3日凌晨6時15分在瑪麗醫院逝世，享年[illegible]歲。

何紫，原名何松桓，廣東順德人。

何紫是作家，也是生意人。

這雙重身分，有時還難免有點矛盾。人們總認爲作家比較清高，而生意人俗，是市儈的。

做生意當然要賺錢，不賺錢怎麼養妻活兒？何紫既然要做生意，當然要算賬，不過他有一個難得處，是算大賬，不算小賬。

他創立的山邊社出版書籍超過七百種，有賺錢的也有蝕本的，他的政策是爭取總體有賺，部分的書會蝕本一樣照出。

出版蝕本的書並非由於估計錯誤，而是在意料之中。譬如一些劇本、一些新詩，任誰也知道是書市的毒藥，定蝕無疑。又有一些未有知名度的作者的書，售賣沒有把握。爲了提倡文化事業，爲了鼓勵新作者，何紫願意出版這類的書，願意蝕這樣的本，所以不少寫作人的第一本書是山邊社出版的。

他辦學生刊物《陽光之家》，初期是贈閱，後來只收象徵式的訂費。雖說這是代替山邊書訊的宣傳作用的刊物，可是他在上面所花的心血，所投入的熱忱，所提供的豐富內容，都是絕對超值的。而每期注定虧蝕，他却樂此不疲。

他又邀請大陸文化人來港交流觀光，由於能力有限，他請客人在家中居住，他和家人都能盛意招待，這使他與許多內地的文化人成爲好友，而兩地的文化因緣也結下不少。

我有幾本書由山邊社出版，幸運的是每本都一版再版，因此我經常收到他寄來的版稅，數目十分清楚，更難得的是這種結算在農曆年前總有一次，爲的是中國人過年總要多花點錢，他這樣做是希望別人過一個比較寬裕的年。

這些做法，在某些生意人看來，恐怕會認爲不符做生意原則，何紫却是如此這般的做了。

FROM: THE TIMES, FRIDAY MARCH 21, 1997: 19

When a princess grows up

Rachel Morris rereads the books of her childhood

LATELY I've begun to regret the effects of good children's literature. There's something about the books we loved between the ages of eight and 12 that ensures they're never forgotten. The book that changed my life when I was ten — and not necessarily for the best — was *A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett. The terrible truth is that Sarah Crewe, the princess of the title, with her ladylike stoicism and her belief that goodness will be rewarded if only we don't make a fuss, is with me to this day — and serving me very badly in the competitive Nineties.

Sometimes I think I'd be better off with Fagin or Captain Hook as my exemplars.

Wanting to reread a favourite childhood book is one of those trivial yet important reasons for having children. For years, bedtimes can be an excuse to reread *The Wolves of Willoughby Chase* and *The Family at One End Street*; I've been known to sit up long after the children have gone to sleep, reading their books all over again.

But the trouble with living your life according to the morals of a children's book — any children's book — is that children's books are simple and adult life is complicated. (I was at it again the other day: when some career decision required me to be brave, what image did I summon up? The face of Aslan from one of the *Narnia* books, with his most vicar-ish expression.)

The other difficulty with these books is that they can still prompt us into the most romantic gestures. A friend of mine suddenly upped and left behind an unhappy love affair and a London career to become a primary school teacher in Devon. None of us could understand such a dramatic volte-face until I remembered her favourite books when we first met, aged 11½ — the *Miss Read* stories: quiet tales of a village teacher from a bygone age. Children's books, like adult novels, can sometimes change your life.

These days my daughter reads to herself, but now that I've grown wise to the dangerous effects of some children's classics I worry about what's going on in the privacy of her bedroom. The other day I looked at the Brian Jacques books in which she's been immersed. These literate and readable books are hugely bloodthirsty. A medieval abbey and a band of mice are forever struggling against the forces of evil. Death and villainy is alive on every page. Characters are made appealing — then killed before our eyes. But the message of these books — that you have to fight for what you want, that women cannot be passive, that loyalty and comradeship are the most important virtues — is as likely as anything to stand her in good stead 30 years from now.

Just so long as they don't encourage her to become a mercenary. In which case I shall regret not having given her *A Little Princess*.

兒童文學交流的新篇章

記第六屆滬港兒童文學研討會

口 / 金銘

在復活節假日期間，由香港九位兒童文藝工作者組成的代表團赴滬參加了第六屆滬港兒童文學研討會，

這樣規模的滬港兩地兒童文學交流活動，是由香港兒童文藝協會的創辦人、香港作聯前副會長何紫先生於85年在滬與兒童文學界同行敘會時發起並着手籌辦的，第一屆研討會於87年在滬舉行，兩年後的第二屆在港舉行，如此每兩年復一次，三今已是第六屆了，

研討會由香港兒童文藝協會與中國福利會及上海作家協會聯合舉辦，香港代表團由香港兒協會長真馬儀帶隊，成員有兒童教育家、幼兒文學作家陸趙薇博士，兒童文學作家言婉文、潘金英、宋詒瑞，兒童音樂教育家盧大中、雪少倉，兒童美術教育家郭燕美及出版界二士陸永忠等，

3月17日飛機抵滬已是10時，又整整化了1小時才出得閘來，

第二日下午我們參觀了中國福利會會址，那是一幢精緻的三層花園洋房，曾是舊日將介石伉儷在滬時的下榻處，在那裏我們舉行了新聞發佈會，中國福利會及兒香港兒協向上海新聞界介紹了滬港兩地兒童文學研討會的成因背景及本屆的特殊意義——江澤民最近號召全國「要重視少年兒童文藝」，再加上7月1日香港回歸在即，兩地的合作交流將會更加頻密，雙方回顧了10年以來的交流活動：上海方面有幾十名兒童文藝工作者分幾次赴港參加研討會及各項活動，參觀香港兒童出版社、學校、電視台、電台，學習香港同行的經驗，香港亦有30多名兒童文藝的「發燒友」分批來到上海——中國兒童文學的發祥地，這裏擁有一支強勁的兒童文學作家隊伍，兒童文學的寫作和出版實力強大、基礎堅厚，香港朋友們向老前輩請教，了解上海的兒童文藝工作情況。近年來，兩地的交流不僅在兒童文學方面，還擴大到文藝及少兒教育方面，用一切手段來為兒童服務，如去年年底，為配合97年上海國際少年兒童文化藝術節而在兩地舉辦的「藍天白鴿傳友情」信鴿放飛活動就十分成功，

第六屆研討會的主題是「滬港兩地兒童的不同特點與閱讀興趣之比較」，

新聞發佈會上有兒童時代社的十多位小記者參加，他們是從各校申請者中精選出來的，課餘參加「兒童時代」雜誌的編輯、採訪、寫稿工作的，

當天晚上，中國福利會在上海賓館宴請香港代表團，福利會副主席杜淑貞女士、兒童文學界老前輩、著名兒童文學作家陳伯吹志先生抗僅以及老作家任溶溶、上海作協主席羅洛先生等出席了宴會，陳老已逾90，但鶴髮童顏，紅光滿面，前幾年曾來港參加交流活動，是香港兒童文學工作者的老朋友了，

3月29日上午，研討會在上海文藝中心正式開始，由兒童時代社社長邱士龍主持，中國福利會副主席杜淑貞女士致詞時細數了在滬港兩地兒童文學交流工作中付出了心血、做出過三大貢獻的前香港兒童協會會長何紫先生以及已故上海兒童文學老作家任大霖先生，香港代表團並專程從香港帶來一盆白色繡花球送任大霖先生家屬，悼念三年逝世的這位兒童文學老前輩，

大會共有八個專題發言，上海兒童文學作家秦文君、謝倩霓發言題目是《特性與共性互補下的少兒閱讀》，指出大陸地區少年兒童多為獨生子女，有着獨特的生長環境及性情、心理和行為——他們集「三千寵愛於一身」，但為比較孤獨的一群，渴望一種真正平等的、深入內心的交往和理解，追求一種平等交流的真摯感情，所以真切地抒寫人類美好感情、體現人與人之間摯愛的作品（富戲劇性和幽默感的作品才能吸引兒童打動兒童，直達兒童的心靈）近年內的成功兒童文學作品就體現了這樣的特點，在影視文化和高科技產品衝擊兒童閱讀風氣的今天，兒童文學作品的內容和形式的雙重完美就顯得十分重要，另外，上海作家韓伍分析了滬港兩地兒童文學的特點，指出處在世紀之交的兩地兒童文學應加強受國三義教育和注意繼承傳統文化，作家程逸汝的發言強調要弘揚人文精神，才能達設高雅的兒童文學，用真善美去培養兒童的人生境界，上海《少年報》編輯黃修紀女士從多年辦報經驗來談現代兒童的閱讀品味，凡反映少兒生活、情感和內心世界的作品會受歡迎；驚險故事、偵破故事得到孩子們青睞；充滿童趣的優美作品能吸引兒童，短小幽默的作品更受兒童喜愛。

Hong Kong Writers Monthly
August 1, 1997

香港方面，莫鳳儀女士介紹了今日香港有關機構推動兒童閱讀的概況，就如何有效引發兒童閱讀興趣、發揮兒童文學教育價值方面談了幾點意見，特別介紹了在她任職校長的學校內推動閱讀風氣的幾種做法，兒童文學作家、從事幼兒教育工作四十年的陸趙鈞鴻博士談了香港幼兒的閱讀特點——淺語藝術、合適的內容、簡單的主題、趣味性以及配合插圖的重要，身爲教師和兒童文學作家的潘金英和宋詒瑞的一組發言引用了兩個調查報告介紹了香港少年兒童近年的閱讀實況，分析了閱讀風氣薄弱的原因並提出改進辦法。香港兒協理事唐婉文女士則介紹了兒協成立15年以來對推廣兒讀閱讀的貢獻，包括舉辦兒童文學節（圖書博覽會、兒童寫作座談會、爲兒童寫作活動等），連續舉辦三屆兒童小說創作獎，全港兒童寫故事大賽，「故事三國」等有意義的活動。

大會宣讀論文後，分中學組及小學幼兒組進行討論，會上兩地代表相聚一堂，暢所欲言，交流兩地不同年齡少年兒童的閱讀情況，大家感到滬港兩地有很多共同處：都是現代化的大都市，科技先進，經濟發達，電子媒介電子遊戲的流行影響兒童的閱讀習慣，學習任務繁重功課壓力大也是造成兒童沒時間閱讀課外書的原因。上海甚三有家長責問作家：你們爲甚麼寫這些閑書給孩子看？因此作爲兒童文學作家所面臨的任務更爲艱巨，要創作出兒童喜愛的、富特色的、幽默風趣的作品來爭取小讀者。小學幼兒組的討論中，大家還談到兒童詩歌的創作是一薄弱環節，要多加提倡，而兩地兒童文學作家互相交流作品、觀摩學習的機會也太少。

兩天的大會結束，正如中國福利會副秘書長艾柱芳先生在總結時指出的那樣，這次會議，好比是「辛勤耕耘的農夫在交流豐收碩果，是各地的廚師在一起品嚐美味佳餚，也是圍了相聚在讚賞美麗的花朵」，舊雨新知相見歡愉，臨分別時相依依。

上海朋友們在會議期間還爲我們安排了多項參觀活動：在上海參觀滬港兩地兒童生活攝影展，參觀了新落成的市圖書館和博物館，夜遊外灘，欣賞和平飯店老年爵士樂團演出；會議結束後並由兒童時代社副社長王金山等陪同到紹興參觀魯迅故居及紀念館，遊覽三義之的鵝池及書法聖地蘭亭，並泛舟東湖，我們還在咸亨酒店品嚐紹興加飯酒，大嚼茴香豆；又在酒店卡拉ＯＫ室內大展歌喉，盡情歌舞，紹興的民情淳樸，價廉物美，各人更是瘋狂購物，滿載而歸。五天的活動豐富多彩，既學到了東西，又鬆弛了身心。

文藝沙龍

Hong Kong Writers Monthly
August 1, 1997

97. 8. 31 B
Ming Pao Daily

寫意空間

兒童神話的投影——悼兒童文學

神話，是成人的童話；童話，是兒童的神話。神話、童話是人類無意識的揭露、內省的靈光、生命突圍的資本。

卡西勒（ Ernst Cassirer）認爲在人類歷史中，神話成了統治階層的非理性力量。同樣，我們看今天的所謂童話，其實明顯地爲着成人社會服務。

如果筆者說香港根本沒有童話，這話殘忍而不過分，縱然香港有很多熱心的童話工作者，如五十年代成長起來的有本土作家劉惠瓊、金依、何紫、阿濃、紀容、海辛等等。

但這是一個文化情調的問題。一個理性早熟的民族把遠古神話理性化、固於行爲、精神規範的層面，也有不少歸化爲哲學，所以我們無須驚訝，比起西方，我們慢了十多個世紀才意識到兒童文學是個可開墾的園地。可惜的是，三四十年代從事童話的作家，大部分是大陸的知識分子，整個積弱的民族文化及抗戰的沉重包袱，都給他們對小孩的寫作蒙上一片蒼涼，我們怎能想像坦白地在童謠裏叫喊抗日口號（文匯報．兒童園）；《新兒童》中的「桃金娘」故事採用實用主義的標準貶能歌善舞的銀嫣，褒會織布的金娘。

奄奄一息毫無想像

直至五十年代，一群本土作家的努力，作品雖豐富，卻往往又不離教育相，把成人所嘉許的德目如勇敢、毅力、孝順、誠實、善良等等價值標準以童話的面紗包裝起來，故事到了後來還是聽大人話的小孩受讚賞，來來去去是培養小孩討好成人品格，這樣鞏固成人已建構好的社會法則，保證天下太平，卻使我們的後代成了侏儒，一代接一代，久而成蟻民！

「童心」是個先於一切價值判斷的心，這是個優游的心，是生命創發的泉源，它能看見一個更開拓的世界。由此，所有把童話當作教育工作的人都患了「兒童性惡恐懼症」。

時至今天，不少兒童雜誌仍奄奄一息似的欠

新報
HK Daily News
Magpaper
12/9/97.

Bi筆敗不 再談兒童文學

看過了香港電台製作的關於香港文學的電視節目，名爲《寫意空間》，剛剛的一輯是探討兒童文學的特輯。當中找來了幾個「專家」，說東說西大談兒童文學的功能性，即向兒童提供一些是非黑白的標準，讓她/他們在「未成熟」及「未了解」社會各種事件以及「道德觀」之時，「教化」他/她們「正確」的人生觀。

眞的把我嚇個半死。

對於性的一個重要題目，就是關於成人(或標準道德化)社會加諸於兒童的控制。兒童可以知道甚麼(從沒有人問她/他有權知道甚麼)？都控制於成人手裏，對於甚麼是家庭、甚是是愛？甚麼是人生必經階段(與異性拍拖結婚生「子」)？都有一套極權獨裁的「觀念」，在社會教化過程之中注入「小朋友」的腦袋之中。

教科書中的標準家庭(父、母、子、女)，甚至電視劇與廣告的家庭(或「幸福」家庭模式)，都不斷的把兒童磨練成爲一式一樣或對性只有一種形式一模一樣的人。兒童文學，在我們的社會，我看到的只是強化單一「性」，或強制異性愛的不道德事情。

社會道德標準(Morality)與道德(ethics)不同，What is moral 似乎是大眾接受的甚麼是對或好，例如異性愛核心家庭，其他一切在此以外的都是壞(又是這些二元思想)，至少我在所謂兒童文學裏讀不到向兒童提供多元性意識探討，或現實社會非異性愛者的實際處境的刻畫。家庭觀念一直以來也慢慢的改變，單親家庭是一個例子，父母是非異性愛者的例子也越來越浮現(不是越來越多，而是這案情的主角，自覺可以向人表白及求助)。小朋友對性的求知慾也越來越強，可以怎樣的兒童文學中探索他/她們自身對性的獨有版本呢？

一個人可以不大 moral 但卻提出很多 ethical issues。

兒童文學也可以這樣。

期望給兒童閱讀的東西會有所改變，包括教科書、兒童文學、漫畫及雜誌、電視！

聶海珊

作者(左)與母親代表香港兒童文學作家出席漢城世界兒童文學大會，中為韓國兒童文學會長李在徹

國際兒童文學的盛會

—— 漢城之行

□ 周蜜蜜

盛夏的早晨，氣候炎熱。

作爲香港兒童文學界的代表，我被邀往南韓漢城，參加世界兒童文學大會暨第四屆亞洲兒童文學大會。

坐在飛機艙內，回想這些年來，亞洲兒童文學界和國際兒童文學活動的各種交流，心情難免一陣陣激動，思緒如眩窗外的雲浪，不斷翻滾流湧。

早於1990年，亞洲兒童文學學會在韓國漢城創立，1993年，再於日本東京召開第二次會議，1995年在中國上海舉行第三屆會議，而這一次的漢城第四屆亞洲兒童文學大會，已擴大爲世界兒童文學大會，除了中、日、韓、馬來西亞等國家之外，更有來自德、俄、瑞典、波蘭、捷克、南非等西方共九個國家的代表出席。

自8月4日至9日的五天會議議程，主題集中在〈世界兒童文學之現在與未來〉上，56位代表發表了論文，論題分爲四個方面：

一、西方兒童文學與東方（中、日、韓）兒童文學。

二、藝術的兒童文學與大衆的兒童文學。

三、第21世紀後新型業社會與兒童文學。

四、對人類來說，兒童文學是甚麼？

根據資料顯示，現代的兒童文學是經由18世紀和19世紀，以歐洲爲中心發展起來的，然而，東方的兒童文學卻是形成於與西方不同的土壤之中，兒童文學按照各國的種族和歷史風俗的特徵，發展得豐富多采，各有千秋，韓國兒童文學學會會長李在徹首先指出，雖言各國的兒童文學之間有異質的因素，但從根本上說來，卻沒有甚麼不同，目前重要的是，面對新的世界性的時代，應當通過各種各樣的的文學交流，對各自的兒童文學作一番比較，撲六三相對接的新的空間，通過文學的疏通，記清兒童文學根源上的同質性與普遍性，是很有意義的，吸取其他國家的兒童文學精華，以豐富本國的文化，非常重要！

中國兒童文學研究會理事長陳子君，在大會發言中詳盡介紹了中國當代兒童文學理論和實踐的主要特點，他歸納了兒童文學理論和創作的「中國特色」，就是思想和藝術相統一；教育和娛樂相統一；文學的一般規律和兒童特點相統一；時代精神和民族特色相統一，他坦承，中國兒童文學創作，從1957年到1976年，將近二十年的時間裏「走了很長一段彎路，出現了不少違反藝術創作規律、缺乏藝術特點的質量低劣的作品，這在中國當代兒童文學發展史上是一個嚴重的教訓，也可以說是一個嚴重的失誤，直到1976年『文化大革命』結束以後，中國兒童文學界在整個國家『撥亂反正』的大環境中，才使這種失誤逐步得到糾正。」

中國兒童文學研究會第一副會長、浙江

Hong Kong Writers Monthly
October 1, 1997, —4

Hong Kong Writers Monthly
October, 1997 — 4

師範大學教授蔣風，對東西文化撞擊下的中國兒童文學進行探討，他認為中國兒童文學在「三、四」以後誕生，有着不同於西方兒童文學的特色，包括：

1．比較崇尚理性；
2．重視教育意味；
3．強調人格培養；
4．忽視兒童本位；
5．缺乏浪漫氣質；
6．更少荒誕怪異。

瑞典斯德哥爾摩(Stockholm)大學教授瑪麗亞·尼古拉耶娃(Maria Nakolajeva)則指出，「東方的兒童文學的特性是講故事，有情節有頭有尾。今後，兒童文學將以東方的這種特性，從多姿部的敘事轉向西歐的實存的成人文學靠近。那麼，兒童文學是隨着西方文化的進展而日新月異的一種現象？還是傳統的進行教育的工具？我認為，總有一天，兒童文學會消失於文學主流之中。」

澳大利亞悉尼大學教授倫蒂·本弗里(Rhonda Bunbury)介紹了「從西歐向東方移動的澳大利亞兒童文學作品」——珂爾·貝利的《中國貨幣》，講述了一個出生在澳大利亞的華僑第二代的少女故事，她的父親患癌病，逝世前交給她一枚古代的銅錢。為了尋找這枚錢幣的另一半，她陪伴母親到中國去作探索性的旅行，故事的焦點是在現代的中國，當然也涉及古代的中國。而旅程則結束於當代事件發生之時，「把如此強有力的政治事件寫進兒童文學，把家庭、教育與政府連結在一起，這在東方也許會不允許其出版。然而，在西方，恰恰是這些才是有影響的故事情節。作者為了敘述現代的青少年與現代社會的契合，作了許多的努力，而插敘了這一歷史事件，則使這部作品更加有了吸引讀者的魅力。」本弗里教授認為：「如果有人對作者把這些既是歷史的又是政治的事件包含在描寫青少年的小說中有甚麼想法，從而進行評論，那麼，我認為這在泛文化的交流方面似乎是很有用的。」

對於「藝術的兒童文學與大眾的兒童文學」，代表在發言中爭議比較多。

日本聖和大學教授烏越信(Torigoe-Shin)說，日本現在的藝術的兒童文學和大眾的（通俗的）兒童文學既對立而又共存的構圖，幾乎是過去的局面的重演。所以，如果只看現象，也許可以說是又重現了兒童文學的本來面目。

日本兒童文學者協會國際部長、作家中尾明(Nakao Akira)認為：「現在，一說起兒童文學，有人便把它區分為純粹文學的（藝術的）兒童文學與大眾的兒童文學，把二者對立起來。這是落後於時代的陳腐的思考方式。」他主張「把兒童文學的魅力無結起來。」台灣兒童文學作家林煥彰指出，「在台灣，一向有『兒童文學』與『兒童讀物』的說法，中國大陸也有同樣的說法，這是分別說明兩個很清楚的概念。」不可諱言的，20世紀90年代一切都有『商品化』的趨向，在世紀末市場經濟陰影籠罩下的『兒童文學』已不可避免的淪為『商品』的一種……如何在『藝術的』和『大眾的』兩極中取得均衡是否我們兒童文學的寫作者應該努力思考寫作的目標？既要創作高水準、富教育性的兒童文學，也要能捕捉小讀者的閱讀心理和需求。」中國童話作家秦文君發言時說：「依我所見，藝術的和大眾的是兒童文學的立身之本，兒童文學並不是一種簡易的文學，它能夠抵達藝術的高峰，它很深奧。這種深奧在於它既不能依附成人文學，但又要充分揭示世界的奧秘，揭示豐富的心靈、深刻複雜的情感；這種深奧還在於兒童文學的主要閱讀對象是少兒，它必須尋找一種孩子喜歡的單純形式來講故事，闡述人類話題和人文精神，離開了藝術，兒童文學缺乏生命活力，淺薄、委瑣；離開了大眾，兒童文學貧瘠，難以推廣、發達。」

與會代表還討論了20世紀兒童文學如何和21世紀接軌，提出了比較樂觀的展望。對於人類，兒童文學究竟是甚麼呢？這也再一次令兒童文學作家明確兒童文學的價值。中、日、韓的兒童文學作家先後指出，兒童文學是對於未來的偉大的投資，是「為文明着想的文學」，它，賦予我們以直視現實，想到未來，向更好的社會營造的力量。而隨着世界的信息傳遞媒體的變化，在21世紀將起相當巨大的作用。

大會還同時舉行各國兒童文學作品、圖書展覽。結束之日，正是「立訣」之時。大家笑說很有收穫。而第五屆大會預定於1999年在台北舉行，第六屆是在北京，2001年召開。

文學沙龍

我国少儿出版事业迅速崛起

全国规模的出版体系已基本形成

本报讯 正在迅速崛起的我国少儿出版事业，呈现前所未有的蓬勃发展的繁荣景象。据《中国少儿出版》创刊号透露的最新资料表明，少儿读物全国规模的出版体系已基本形成。现在全国有 29 家专业少儿出版社，有 130 多家出版社设有少儿读物编辑室或出版少儿读物。1996 年出版少儿图书 6000 种，比 1995 年出书 4000 多种，增长约 50%。优秀图书重版率已达到 60%。少儿读物出版品种占我国图书比重的 6%，占世界图书总品种的 0.8%。全国还有综合性和专业性少年儿童报纸 69 种，少年儿童期刊 100 余种。众多的图书出版社和报刊社，为全国 3.8 亿少年儿童提供了各个年龄段需要的图文并茂、品种齐全、制作精良的书报刊天地。

目前，全国从事少儿读物工作的编辑有 2000 多人，其中有编审、副编审高级专业技术职称的 200 多人。从事少年儿童读物文学创作的作家和评论家有 3000 余人，其中有 500 多人是中国作家协会会员。少儿读物走向世界，对外合作交流和版权贸易也有较快进展，先后与世界 50 多个国家和地区的 600 多家出版社建立了友好往来，并于 1990 年加入了国际儿童读物联盟(IBBY)，成功举办了两届北京国际儿童图书博览会。同时，每年派出近百人参加各类国际图书博览会和少儿出版研讨会。我国对外翻译出版单位共用 14 种外文出版 950 种少儿图书计 200 多万册，发往 110 多个国家和地区。近 3 年来，全国少儿出版界与国外出版社已经进行和正在进行的版权贸易项目就达 800 多项。

（凌 武）

出版界

专栏主持人：魏芳

People's Daily Overseas Edition
6/Oct/97. 第四版

Books open young minds

JACKY WONG spoke to famed children's author Gillian Rubinstein about her prolific literary career

Author Gillian Rubinstein is a familiar name in Australia where her books are avidly read by youngsters varying in age from toddlers to teenagers.

But her fame has gone far beyond her native shores.

The 56-year-old has written more than 25 books over the past 13 years, drawn from a well of sheer inspiration.

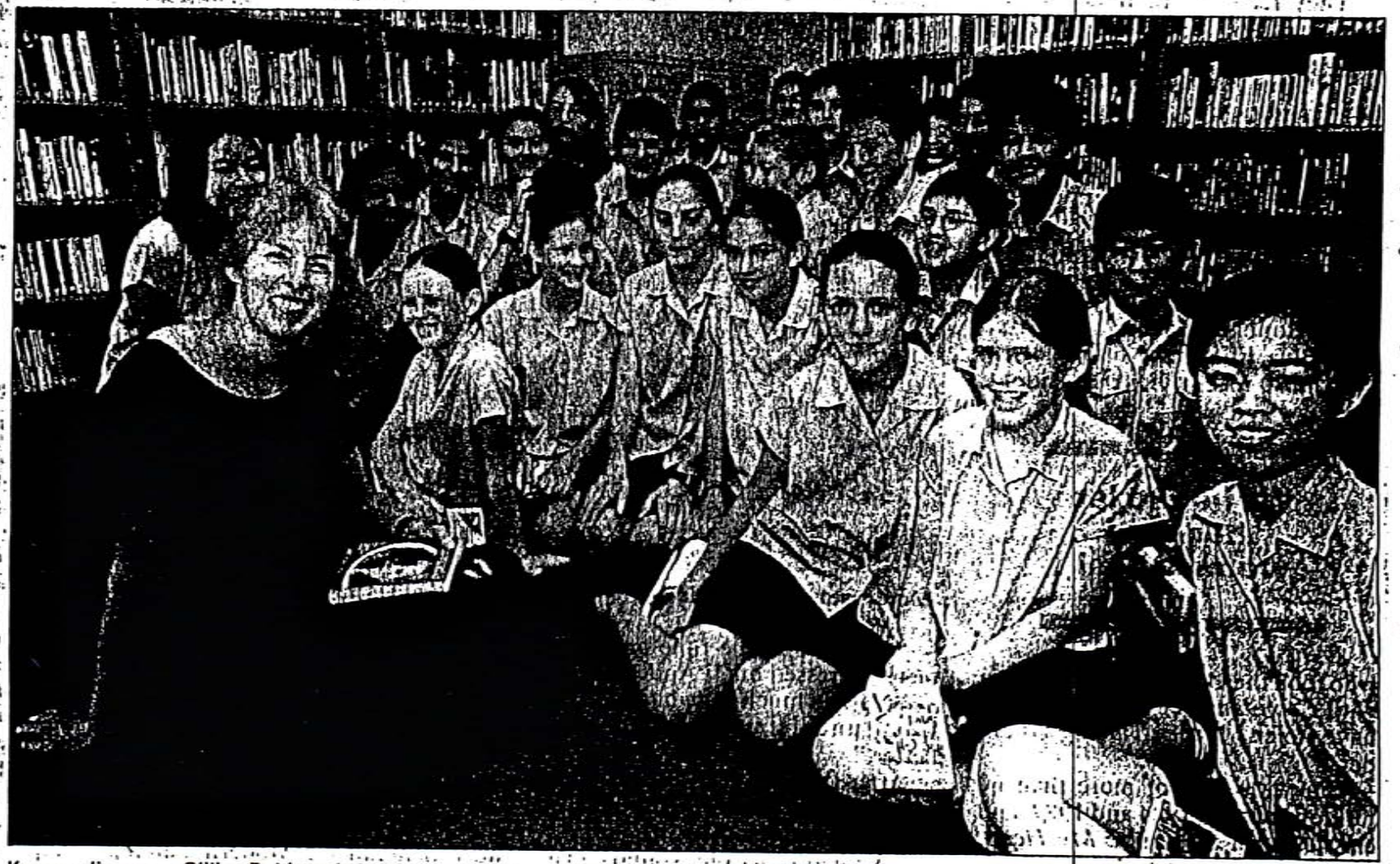
Rubinstein's first novel, *Space Demons* published in 1985, won her an Honour Award in the Book of the Year Awards: Older Readers, The Peace Award for Children's Literature, and first prize in the 1988 South Australian Festival Awards.

The two other parts of the trilogy *Skymaze* and *Shinkei* followed later.

Rubinstein was in Hong Kong at the invitation of the English Schools Foundation to conduct 54 introduction to literature sessions at 19 schools.

Her one-month stay gave her ample time to get an overview of local students' writing techniques.

"They're marvellous and have shown a high level of creative thinking.



Keen audience . . . Gillian Rubinstein holds court at Island School. Pictures by WAN KAM-YAN

Sunday Young Post May 17, 1998 — 1

"They're responsive to new ideas and are especially keen on reading."

Reading books to children could help motivate them to read and write more, Rubinstein said, especially in a technological age when youngsters were bombarded by TV and video games.

"Reading story books is a wonderful experience. It teaches vocabulary and gives an understanding of other's lives.

"If you read a lot, it's one step towards learning to write."

She said parents could motivate their children to read by exposing them to a wide range of books.

She said she had always loved reading as a child.

Rubinstein started her career in journalism but started writing books for children after she had her three children, now aged between 18 and 24.

"When they were little I would invent characters for them. There was this giant who was very much like them. If they could not tie their laces, nor could he, and he helped them do these things.

"The greatest satisfaction is knowing your readers love your books," she said.

Her favourite book is her recent publication, *Galax-Arena*, about children kidnapped to entertain aliens, which has sold between 15,000 and 20,000 copies in Australia. It has also won an Honour Book in the 1993 Children's Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards for Older Readers.

Reading story books is a wonderful experience. It teaches vocabulary and understanding of other people's lives

Sunday Young Post May 17, 1998 — 1

BOOKS

Children's publisher Blyton in Asia drive

SHEEL KOHLI in London

Monday June 8 98. SCMP Business 2

The creator of some of Britain's most popular children's characters, Enid Blyton, has teamed up with the former head of Warner Brothers Consumer Products in Asia to develop a position for the group in the region.

Shrugging off the depressed consumer markets in the wake of the financial crisis, Enid Blyton – which has characters such as Noddy and the Famous Five – said it would establish a base in Hong Kong to cover the mainland, Singapore, the Philippines, South Korea, Japan, India, New Zealand and Australia.

The group would be 51 per cent owned by Enid Blyton (Asia) and led by Lee Chapman, who established Warner Brothers Consumer Products in Asia. He will be joined by Andrew Craissati, former managing director of the Magna Group, and Nicholas James, formerly assistant general manager at TVB.

"The fact that Enid Blyton combines so many great characters and stories and has such a solid literary base from which to market and develop into TV and consumer products makes it one of the unique intellectual properties of its kind in the world today," Mr Chapman said.

"The children's market in Asia is especially ready for characters and stories that can work in local language translations and local language TV shows."

Enid Blyton managing director David Lane, who will be chairman of the joint venture, said Mr Chapman had important local market insight, as well as experience and knowledge of the local children's character market, to make the operation a success.

The new company would enable a focus to be given to this task from within Asia, allowing Enid Blyton (Asia) to penetrate these markets.

Winnie the Pooh dons a toga

Booktales

Elisabeth Tacey

Let's celebrate some literary eccentricity. For lovers of Latin and of A A Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*, heaven is coming. Perhaps you know that the classic tale of the Bear with Very Little Brain was translated into Latin in 1960 as *Winnie Ille Pu*. It is the only book in Latin to have graced *The New York Times* bestseller list – but, we predict, not for much longer.

Because now a translation of *The House at Pooh Corner* is on its way, courtesy of Penguin Putnam's Dutton imprint. The book, for some reason to be called *Winnie Ille Pu Semper Ludet* ("Winnie the Pooh will Always be Playing"), will be available in October, complete with Ernest H Shepard's drawings – some showing Pooh in a toga.

The *South China Morning Post* books page, which assumes this is for big rather than little Latin readers, applauds such a glorious, even pointless, venture. How, we wonder, will translator Brian Staples deal with some of Pooh's immortal phrases? We don't suppose Virgil ever had occasion to say "Time for a small smackerel" or had heard of a heffalump.

Having last week criticised the high price of the hardback version of *The Final Years of British Hong Kong: the discourse of Colonial Withdrawal* (Macmillan, $650), by City University lecturer John Flowerdew, we now learn there is a softback version for the more reasonable $135.

Captain Charles "Chic" Eather will be marking the closure of Kai Tak by signing copies of his book, *The Airport of the Nine Dragons*, at the South China Morning Post bookshop at Star Ferry from 12.30pm today.

July 4 1998 Saturday
The Reviews — Books — 8

Bear's back in town

McDonald's might be providing the toys, but a Dutch group is offering children something more lifelike, says **Nell Nelson**

This month sees the double return of the Bear of Very Little Brain and his furry friends from One Hundred Acre Wood.

While McDonald's ships in 300,000 promotional soft toy Winnies (in scout uniform, pyjamas or just plain Poohs), Tiggers, and Eyores, in response to huge demand, Holland's Introdans Ensemble for Youth presents a ballet based on the *Winnie the Pooh* books by A A Milne from tonight until Sunday.

The group was established in 1989 alongside The Introdans Ballet Company. An invitation from the Provisional Urban Council to open this summer's International Children's Dance Carnival, has led to their first appearance in Hong Kong.

Ensemble for Youth Director, Roel Voorintholt, said the company performs the world over, exclusively for children, using professional ballet dancers.

The *Winnie the Pooh* ballet is aimed at children from four to seven.

"I love Pooh," confided Mr Voorintholt by phone from the Netherlands. "There are lots of nice characters."

The biggest problem was the costumes, he admitted. "I was inspired by the Royal Ballet's success in London with Beatrix Potter's animal characters, where the faces look realistic. We worked for months on the masks."

Also, with only 10 dancers, the touring company is unusually small. In the original books Pooh's friend Piglet is a tiny pig and Tigger is a larger-than-life tiger, yet, thanks to the skill of choreographer T C Howard, the dancers' size is forgotten.

The music was specially composed by James Mackie. "It is very special," Voorintholt said. "It's not classical ballet music, or even modern music, but is done with computer."

Englishman Milne wrote several *Pooh* books based on his son Christopher Robin's toy bear.

"It was hard to pack so many stories into one hour, so we narrowed down the choice to the ones which lent themselves best to action," Voorintholt said.

These include one of the best loved scenes – Eyore's birthday, when the morose donkey receives two presents from his friends – an empty honey jar from Pooh and a burst balloon from Piglet.

Other classic tales of Pooh eating all Rabbit's honey and getting stuck in the door of the rabbit hole; and of the arrival of Tigger, who bounces around the forest in search of what Tiggers love best, are also among what the Introdans troupe will do best in Hong Kong.

On a double bill programme the company will also perform *Uccelli*, the dancers imitating birds.

Choreographer Nacho Dusto took the troupe to a zoo to research this piece, and the audience will be able to identify plenty of scratching, gobbling, flapping and flying from the Dutch menagerie. Its Winnie the Pooh ballet has successfully played in England and Scotland, where, apparently, the exuberant tiger stole the show. After Hong Kong the company will perform in Singapore and Cuba.

Winnie the Pooh books have been translated into 33 languages including Latin, *Poah* in Dutch, and *siu hung Wai Nei* ("Little bear Winnie") in Chinese.

Whatever his name, the Bear of Very Little Brain often has a lot of muddled but worthy wisdom.

"Poetry and hum aren't things which you get," he says in one of the books, "they're things which get you. All you can do is to go where they can find you."

If you go to the City Hall Theatre this weekend, Pooh's poetry and humming will find you.

Winnie The Pooh Today, Sunday, 7.30pm; Tomorrow, 2.30pm. City Hall Theatre. $80–$160 Urbtix 2734 9009

► *Cover illustration by Winne Ho*

Toys from API Prism

SCMP July 17, 1998
Friday
Weekend Entertainment – 3

Bear essentials (above, left): Introdans' poster for its Winnie the Pooh presentation.

Popular Pooh (above) the Dutch company's Ensemble for Youth tours the world.

Showtime (left) it's all action for the Ensemble's small cast of 10 dancers, who are big on energy.

SCMP July 17, 1998 Friday
Weekend Entertainment – 3

Young cast waltzes on with Roald Dahl's Matilda

Amanda Watson

You can work wonders with two folding ladders, a plank and a sheet. Hong Kong Youth Arts Festival founder and director Lindsey McAlister and a cast that has to keep up with her enthusiasm and energy will bring Roald Dahl's *Matilda* to the Hong Kong Arts Centre with a minimum of props. What there will be is a stage full of visual gags, charming costumes, and fast-paced direction.

And the production, in Cantonese and English, also offers anyone on summer holiday a good few tips for dealing with unwanted, troublesome parents prone to tantrums when they get bored with the lengthy school break.

Matilda (played by Jasmin Chan, 10) is an extraordinary girl but her gormless, irritable parents (David Ho Cheung-ip and Irene Tsui) think she is simply a nuisance.

As if this is not enough, Matilda has to cope with the odious Miss Trunchbull (Vickie Yue Ning-kong), who terrorises the whole school.

Although she is sensitive and brilliant, Matilda does not gain any really useful knowledge until one day, while being picked on, she realises she has extraordinary powers and can make trouble for the monstrous grown-ups in her life.

The cast of 20, all but one previously unknown to McAlister, were recruited through auditions for the short summer workshop which is sponsored by Standard Chartered Bank and the Kadoorie Foundation, and is a joint production with the Hong Kong Arts Centre.

Hard times . . . Matilda (Jasmine Chan) suffers at the hands of two schoolmates, played by Gary Ko and Jennifer Tam.

A "long, sweet letter" from Dahl's widow, Lucy, revealed they are in good company: Danny DeVito has just secured the rights to bring out a musical version in Britain, years after he starred as Matilda's father in the film of the book.

"The Dahl estate is very hot on monitoring the rights," McAlister says, "but I just happened to be in a meeting with David Tang, one of our patrons, when he said he knew Lucy Dahl. So he rang her up for us and she said she was delighted we were doing a Cantonese version."

Matilda is ideal material, McAlister feels, for the cast of very mixed ages and experience. "I did an English version of *Matilda* years ago, a very workshoppy, school performance, but I always thought I'd like to do a bilingual piece and a bigger piece. So when we decided to do summer school, this seemed a very accessible work. Plus a lot of kids have read the book and seen the film. It's very well-known to them."

A backstage crew of 20 are also taking part, and will go on backstage tours of theatres in Hong Kong to gain more experience. Make-up and sound workshops are also planned. "We're trying to encourage the kids to get an overall, very broad idea of what theatre's about, as well as working on this production. They haven't got very much rehearsal time but I'm very happy with the way things are going, the way they're coping."

***Matilda*, July 21 and 22, 10.30am and 3.30pm, Shouson Theatre, Hong Kong Arts Centre, $50.**

SCMP July 17, 1998 Friday Weekend Entertainment — 3

It takes maturity to write for children

Authors Martin Waddell and Tomie dePaola are idols of a young generation, who have learned the secret of keeping a youngster's interest, writes **Sue Green**

As the cheers and stamping die down, the fans leap from their seats to rush at the celebrity. He runs from the crush to the table on the stage where his publicist awaits, and a pushing, shoving queue forms, down the steps and round the auditorium, all waiting for a word from their idol, for his signature.

On stage the celebrity, who receives 100,000 letters a year from his fans, is patient and cheerful with them, resting his hand occasionally between signatures. Here in Melbourne the queue is manageable.

But in the United States, where he signs for up to three hours at a time, he takes painkillers and anti-inflammatory tablets throughout the day to keep the pain from repetitive strain at bay.

So is he a rock singer, a racing driver, a television star? No. Above the school desk at which he sits beams the grey-haired, cheeky cherub face of 64-year-old children's writer Tomie dePaola.

At a girls' school on the other side of town, Martin Waddell is receiving a similar hero's welcome. When he talked and read from his internationally loved works such as *Can't You Sleep Little Bear?* and *Farmer Duck* (Walker Books) at the recent Sydney Writers' Festival, he packed the town hall and was still signing books as the cleaners were turning the lights out.

Waddell, from Northern Ireland, has written 187 books and has sold many million children's books since he made the switch from adult fiction and signed with Walker Books in 1965.

For DePaola, an American of Italian-Irish extraction, this year marks his 36th year as a writer. He has written or illustrated 201 books, and on his left hand has a large swelling on his tendon – the result, he says, of all those years of opening books at signings.

He wins a gasp of admiration from his young audience when he tells them he has appeared on the *Barney* show, the mega-hit children's television show watched by 18 million kids a day. And when he says that his perhaps most-loved character, Strega Nona, "built me a swimming pool" – or her earnings did – it is a hint that for both men, children's books are the means to an extremely good living.

DePaola, who trained as an artist, still holds a two-yearly exhibition and calls himself an illustrator-writer rather than the other way round. He knew he wanted to be a writer and artist at age four and never changed his mind.

"My mum read aloud to my brother and I every single night and I think that is one of the most important things people can do for one another," he says, telling of his plans to start Tomie's Read Aloud Club that will only admit children who read aloud.

Waddell began writing adult fiction for money while he learned to write well enough to write what he wanted – though he did not know then that what he wanted was to write for children. He had early success: his 1966 novel *Otley* was made into a film and his Irish romances under the pen name Catherine Sefton sold well.

But it was not until he stayed at home and raised his own children while his wife Rosaleen worked, that he learned what later made him a successful writer for littlies.

The trauma of being next to an exploding bomb in Northern Ireland in 1968 stopped him writing for several years, until 10 years later he published two Catherine Sefton novels and the picture book that was to lead to his five-book, £10,000 (about HK$126,000) contract with Walker Books – "real money in those days," he says.

Now, although Waddell writes only for children, he does not worry about writing a non-bestseller. *Tango's Baby*, for instance, is a novel for teenagers about a 17-year-old boy, an unsophisticated "child" who gets his 14-year-old girlfriend pregnant. After encouraging her to have the baby, he cannot cope with the practicalities of fatherhood.

"That is a pattern of living for 15-year-old readers to look at," he says. "I am saying it is not a good idea to get pregnant when you are 14, and I am also saying to them, actions have consequences."

Most of his output, though, is picture books with emotion in the drawings and ostensibly simple stories. "The artist gives the depth to the story and the emotion," he says.

Most of his books carry a serious message, though Waddell would disapprove of that word. "I look for something at the centre of the book which is important to children. There has to be something a child will relate to."

Waddell is emphatic that no successful children's writer can get away with preaching to children. He shares with dePaola strong views about not using books to hammer home a message, and about offering children an optimistic view of a harsh world through the books they read.

"All my books are designed to make children look for themselves. A child has no knowledge of the world and I present patterns of what life can be," Waddell says.

"In telling a story I am trying to share certain patterns, but when I write for children I cannot offer them despair. I must offer them hope at some level."

And so with *Can't You Sleep Little Bear*, which has sold more than two million copies. Waddell does not flinch from children's fear of the dark but shows it can be conquered when Big Bear takes Little Bear into the dark to confront the little one's phobia.

DePaola agrees about the message and the need for hope. "I never try to shove lessons down their throats", he says. "My books have to have an honesty. I never try to put one over on kids.

"But more than anything I really want to impart a sense of hope. The world is not as safe a place for children as it used to be, but I still want to tell them life is really wonderful and to be lived and it is OK to laugh and cry.

"After I'm talking to kids for a few minutes – and I think with my books it is the same thing – they

11 July 1998 (Sat) SCMP The Review (9)

forget my books are done by an adult; they speak to the heart of the child. The core of a really good children's book is heart."

DePaola has given old fables a modern take – Strega Nona's magic pasta pot, for instance, is based on the old story about a porridge pot, which he says is found in many cultures including China, where it is a rice bowl.

Many of his stories are drawn from his childhood.

Many children struggle to describe what they like about dePaola's books, citing first the distinctive, flat and colourful drawings, then the writing – or vice versa – then realising the appeal is the combination. But for many the autobiographical aspect is the winning element: "He writes about real life, not just fantasy," says youngster Sarah Latham. "I like knowing it is about real people and things that happened."

Requests from older children for his works have persuaded dePaola to move into longer stories with chapters and only small black and white drawings.

Like Waddell, who charms children with his lilting Irish brogue, dePaola loves to read his stories aloud, his voice adopting accents and pitches for each character, arms waving, his young audience hanging on his words.

His story fills an auditorium with noise as hundreds of word-perfect children sing the Strega Nona pasta song with him.

Later in the story, some become almost blue with the strain of holding an "mmmmmmmm", their lips puckered, fingers to lips as they await his signal to blow a kiss.

"That is so cool," gasps a young admirer as dePaola draws Strega Nona with a few simple strokes of a marker pen.

At the back of the auditorium children are swamping staff at the sales table to buy dePaolas for their creator to sign. This is, after all, about selling books. Those unable to buy from a line beside this reporter plead for notebook pages to queue for an autograph.

"You have to write to the razor's edge of being sentimental because most children are very sentimental," Waddell says. "You try to get to the point where that is the right word to use.

"But one of the main things is not being afraid to use words of love."

25 July 1998 (Sat) SCMP The Review (9)

Authors take on the 'big issues'

Books about death and suicide, sibling rivalry, bullying and homelessness line the shelves – of children's fiction.

Today's children's writers are tackling "big issues". The rival brothers and sisters may be small rabbits and the homeless one a mouse, and fear of the unknown may be confronted by two cute bears in a picture book, but the issues are the same as those facing human adults and children.

Some children's writers aim to educate and help children confront serious issues in an often scary world, while others argue that sending messages is abhorrent: rather, the stories must be about something that engages the reader.

Sydney-based Margaret Wild has published 30 children's books, including *Toby* about the death of an old dog which drew a flood of letters from young readers whose pets had died. Her latest, a picture book called *Rosie and Tortoise* (Little Ark), with illustrator Ron Brooks, is about a little girl learning to accept her tiny baby brother. The characters are hares, but the story was prompted by a newspaper story about premature babies.

Wild says entertainment is her main aim and she has no educational purpose in choosing her subjects. "I really dislike issue books. I don't read them myself so I never set out to write a book with a message," she says. "What I want my stories to do is to be about something, so the stories might leave the readers with something to think about, but I am not interested in being didactic."

Wild hates the trend towards books with an intentional message: "I don't think it works at all," she says. "I think the instructive books are bought by adults with good intentions, but the child might read it once and never go back to it. Children know when they are being preached to."

Sahar Mikhail, of the children's books section of one of Melbourne's big department stores, agrees. Modern children's authors have become so obsessed with reality at the expense of fantasy that there is a buyer backlash, she says.

Her department has seven shelves of books by Enid Blyton, who wrote more than 700 books and 10,000 stories for children in her 46-year career, but who, a decade ago, was relegated to the lower shelves as irrelevant and politically incorrect.

But Rosalind Price, publisher of children's imprint Little Ark, says the lower shelves are where Blyton belongs in a fast-changing

world because Blyton "does not broaden your sense of what it means to be a human being".

But she is not a fan of recent "message" books. Children's books have always dealt with issues of birth and death, love and loss, but a recent "cruder sense" that books can teach has spawned these preaching books.

"These books have a place but they tend not to be great literature and I am rather suspicious of how helpful they are to deal with the issues," Ms Price says.

A representative of Australian children's book sales business, The Little Bookroom, says these titles can be overblown. Last year, for instance, three books for older children about teenage suicide had some dubbing 1997 the year of the suicide book, but three books is a tiny number among thousands that are published. "Something like that tends to get hyped up," the representative says.

Irish author Martin Waddell, who does not like the idea of preaching, says all his books are "about something", but their success is often judged on whether that something is perceived as useful by schools. "Children's books get their reputation from the way they are read in schools and whether teachers can work from them, yet you write them to be read to an audience of one."

Ms Price says the worst "well-intentioned" buyers are school librarians, whose main aim is often buying books to be "used" in the classroom. "There is more concern for ethics and quality put into books for children then any other form of entertainment for them. People believe books should be morally good and that can lead to foolishness.

"But then I am rather pleased they take books that seriously. There is much more harmful stuff for kids on film and television and computer games than in books," she says.

Sue Green

---

25 July 1998 (Sat) SCMP The Review (9)

Works Cited

Primary Sources:

Ashford, Daisy. The Young Visiters or Mr Salteena's Plan. London: Chatto & Windus, 1919.

Alcott, Louisa M. Little Women. 1868. London: Puffin, 1953.

Barrie, J. M. Peter Pan. 1911. London: Puffin, 1967.

Bawden, Nina. Carrie's War. London: Puffin, 1974.

Burnett, Frances Hodgson. The Secret Garden. 1911. London: Puffin, 1951.

Carroll, Lewis. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. 1865. London: Puffin, 1946.

Chen, Hua-ying陳華英. Troublesome Knight《茶煲勇士》. HK: Sunbeam Publications, 1994.

Coppard, Yvonne. Not Dressed Like That, You Don't! London: Puffin, 1991.

Dahl, Roald. BOY: Tales of Childhood. Oxford: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1984.

---. Charlie and the Chocolate Factory. NY: Puffin, 1964.

---. Matilda. NY: Puffin, 1988.

---. The Magic Finger. NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1966.

Fine, Anne. Flour Babies. London: Puffin, 1992.

Grahame, Kenneth. The Wind in the Willows. 1908. London: Puffin, 1983.

He, Zi何紫, et al. A Fly May Become an Elephant 《蒼蠅可能變大象》. HK: Holdery Publishing, 1991.

---. Me as a Youth《少年的我》. HK: Sunbeam Publication, 1992.

Kemp, Gene. The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler. London: Puffin, 1977.

Norton, Mary. The Borrowers. 1952. London: Puffin, 1958.

Pang, Jin-ying and Ming-zhu Pang潘金英,潘明珠. "Fever"發燒記. The Witch and the Angel《女巫與天使》. HK: Sunbeam Publications, 1986.

---. The Devilish Guan-guan《魔女管管》. HK: Sunbeam Publication, 1993.

Spyri, Johanna. Heidi. 1881. NY: Penguin, 1992.

Webster, Jean. Daddy-Long-Legs. 1912. London: Puffin, 1989.

Zhou, Mi-mi周蜜蜜. The Little Princess with a Magical Face.《神面小公主》 2nd ed. HK: Sunbeam Publishers, 1987.

Secondary Sources:
(This list contains some primary works, but I am classifying them as secondary material simply because they supply comments on the texts that I study.)

Aiken, Joan. The Way to Write for Children. London: Elm Tree Books, 1982.

Au, Kit-chun. A Study of Gender Roles as Defined in Primary School Textbooks in Hong Kong. HK: HK Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, 1992.

Bakhtin, Mikhail. Rabelais and His World. Trans. Helene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1984.

Barnard, Malcolm. Fashion as Communication. London & NY: Routledge, 1996.

Barrie, J. M. Preface. The Young Visiters or Mr Salteena's Plan. By Daisy Ashford. London: Chatto & Windus, 1919. 7-13.

Barron, Neil, ed. Fantasy Literature: A Reader's Guide. NY & London: Garland Publishing, 1990.

Bawden, Nina. "A Dead Pig and My Father". Writers, Critics, and Children: Articles from Children's Literature in Education. Ed. Geoff Fox, Graham Hammond, Terry Jones, Frederic Smith and Kenneth Sterck. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976.

Bettelheim, Bruno and Karen Zelan. On Learning to Read: The Child's Fascination with Meaning. London: Penguin, 1982.

Bixler, Phyllis. Afterword. Heidi. By Johanna Spyri. NY: Penguin, 1992. 223-234.

Blake, William. "Songs of Innocence and of Experience". The Norton Anthology of English Literature. Ed. M. H. Abrams. 5th ed. Vol. 2. NY: W. W. Norton, 1986. 31-45.

Butts, Dennis. Introduction. Stories and Society: Children's Literature in its Social Context. Ed. Dennis Butts. Houndmills: Macmillan, 1992. x-xvi.

Byrnes, Alice. The Child: An Archetypal Symbol in Literature for Children and Adults. NY: Peter Lang, 1995.

Carpenter, Humphrey. Secret Gardens: A Study of the Golden Age of Children's Literature. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1985.

Chambers, Aidan. BOOKTALK: Occasional Writing on Literature and Children. London: The Bodley Head, 1985.

Chen, Zi-dian陳子典, ed. Running to the Globe: Review and Speculation of Chinese

Language Chinese Literature. 《走向世界：華文兒童文學審視與展望》 Guangdong: New Era Publishing Co., 1993.

Cheng, Florence. "Happily Ever After. . .: Fairy Tales Reborn with New Values". Varsity April 1996: 24.

Chevalier, Tracy, ed. Twentieth-Century Children's Writers. 3rd ed. Chicago and London: St. James P, 1989.

Children's Books: A Parent's Guide. London: Penguin, 1995.

Choi, Po-king. "Popular Culture". The Other Hong Kong Report 1990. Ed. Richard Y. C. Wong and Joseph Y. S. Cheng. HK: CUP, 1990.

Cooper, Dianne. "Retailing Gender: Adolescent Book Clubs in Australian Schools". Texts of Desire: Essays on Fiction, Femininity and Schooling. Ed. Linda K. Christian-Smith. London: Falmer P, 1993.

Cullinan, Bernice E. Literature and the Child. 2nd ed. Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989.

Darton, F. J. Harvey. Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1958.

Dickens, Charles. Oliver Twist. Ed. Fred Kaplan. NY: W. W. Norton, 1993.

---. Hard Times. Ed. David Craig. London: Penguin, 1854.

Dickinson, Peter. "A Defence of Rubbish". Writers, Critics, and Children: Articles

from Children's Literature in Education. Ed. Geoff Fox, Graham Hammond, Terry Jones, Frederic Smith and Kenneth Sterck. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976.

Dong Rui東瑞. My Perspective of Hong Kong Literature.《我看香港文學》 HK: Holdery Publishing, 1995.

---. "Words and Pictures－The Struggles of Hong Kong Children's Literature". 文字和圖象－香港兒童文學之爭 Children's Literary Art.《兒童文學藝術》 May 1996: 62.

Dixon, Bob. Catching Them Young 1: Sex, Race and Class in Children's Fiction. London: Pluto P, 1977.

Eccleshare, Julia. Treasure Islands: The Woman's Hour Guide to Children's Reading. London: BBC Books, 1988.

Egoff, Sheila A. Thursday's Child: Trends and Patterns in Contemporary Children's Literature. Chicago: American Library Association, n. d.

---, Gordon Stubbs, Ralph Ashley, and Wendy Sutton, eds. Only Connect: Readings on Children's Literature. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1996.

Foster, Shirley and Judy Simons. What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of 'Classic' Stories for Girls. Iowa City: U of Iowa P, 1995.

Frey, Charles and John Griffith. The Literary Heritage of Childhood: An Appraisal of Children's Classics in the Western Tradition. Westport: Greenwood P, 1987.

Frye, Northrop. Anatomy of Criticism. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957.

Goodman, Lizbeth, ed. Approaching Literature: Literature and Gender. London: Routledge, 1996.

Gregory, Horace. Foreword. Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Through the Looking-Glass. By Lewis Carroll. NY: Penguin, 1960. v-x.

Hobson, Margaret and Jennifer Madden. Children's Fiction Sourcebook: A Survey of Children's Books for 6-13 Year Olds. 2nd ed. Hants: Scolar P, 1992.

Hollindale, Peter and Zena Sutherland. "Internationalism, Fantasy, and Realism (1945-1970)". Children's Literature: An Illustrated History. Ed. Peter Hunt. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.

Huizinga, Johann. Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture. Boston: Beacon P, 1955.

Hunt, Peter. An Introduction to Children's Literature. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994.

---. Criticism, Theory, and Children's Literature. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1991.

---, ed. International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature. London and NY: Routledge, 1996.

---. "Winnie-the-Pooh and Domestic Fantasy". Stories and Society: Children's Literature in its Social Context. Ed. Dennis Butts. London: Macmillan, 1992. 112-123.

Inglis, Fred. The Promise of Happiness: Values and Meaning in Children's Fiction. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1981.

Jackson, Rosemary. Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion. 1981. London and NY:

Routledge, 1988.

Knowles, Murray and Kirsten Malmkjær. Language and Control in Children's Literature. London and NY: Routledge, 1996.

Lam, Chui-fun林翠芬. Interviews with Hong Kong Cultural Celebrities. 《香港文化名人採訪錄》 HK: Holdery Publishing獲益出版事業, 1996.

Lemonick, Michael D. "Spare the Rod? Maybe". Time 25 August 1997: 47.

Lesnik-Oberstein, Karí n. Children's Literature: Criticism and the Fictional Child. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1994.

Ling Wu凌武. "Publishing Business for Children's Works Shooting up－Nationwide Publishing System Established" 我国少儿出版事業迅速崛起，全国規模的出版体系已基本形成. People's Daily 6 Oct. 1997, overseas ed.: 4.

Lukens, Rebecca J. A Critical Handbook of Children's Literature. 5th ed. NY: Harper Collins College Publishers, 1995.

Luo, Sun羅隼. The Footprints of Hong Kong Culture. 《香港文化腳印》 HK: Cosmos Books Ltd., 1994.

Lurie, Alison. Don't Tell the Grown-ups: Subversive Children's Literature. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1990.

Mak, Hoi-shan麥海珊. "To Talk about Children's Literature Again"再談兒童文學. Hong Kong Daily News Magpaper 12 Sept. 1997.

Mark, Jan. Introduction. The Oxford Book of Children's Stories. Ed. Jan Mark. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993. ix-xix.

May, Jill P. Children's Literature and Critical Theory: Reading and Writing for Understanding. NY: Oxford UP, 1995.

McGillis, Roderick. A Little Princess: Gender and Empire. NY: Twayne Publishers, 1996.

---. The Nimble Reader: Literary Theory and Children's Literature. NY: Twayne Publishers, 1996.

Nikolajeva, Maria. Introduction. Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature. Ed. Maria Nikolajeva. Westport: Greenwood P, 1995. ix-xi.

Nodelman, Perry. The Pleasures of Children's Literature. 2nd ed. NY: Longman Publishers, 1996.

Opie, Iona and Peter, eds. Preface. The Oxford Book of Children's Verse. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1973. vii-xiii.

Plotz, Judith. "Literary Ways of Killing a Child: The 19th Century Practice". Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature. Ed. Maria Nikolajeva. Westport: Greenwood P, 1995. 1-24.

Pun, Shuk-han. "The Use of the Concept of Gender Role in Local Youth Research". Gender Studies News and Views 14 May 1998: 9-15.

Ray, Sheila. "School Stories". International Companion Encyclopedia of Children's Literature. Ed. Peter Hunt. London and NY: Routledge, 1996.

Reynolds, Kimberley. Children's Literature in the 1890s and the 1990s. Plymouth: Northcote House, 1994.

---. Girls Only? Gender and Popular Children's Fiction in Britain, 1880-1910. NY: Harvester Wheatsheaf, n. d.

Saint-Exupéry, Antoine de. The Little Prince. Trans. Katherine Woods. London: Mammoth, 1991.

Scott, Carole. "Clothed in Nature or Nature Clothed: Dress as Metaphor in the Illustrations of Beatrix Potter and C. M. Barker". Children's Literature. Vol. 22. Ed. Elizabeth Lennox Keyser. New Haven and London: Yale UP, 1994. 70-89.

Shavit, Zohar. "The Historical Model of the Development of Children's Literature". Aspects and Issues in the History of Children's Literature. Ed. Maria Nikolajeva. Westport: Greenwood P, 1995. 27-38.

Sanders, Barry. Sudden Glory: Laughter as Subversive History. Boston: Beacon P, 1995.

Short, Kathy G., ed. Research and Professional Resources in Children's Literature: Piercing a Patchwork Quilt. N. p.: International Reading Association, 1995.

Smith, Lillian. The Unreluctant Years: A Critical Approach to Children's Literature. Chicago: American Library Association, 1953.

Smith, Rona. Sex-role Stereotyping in Selected American Children's Fiction from 1950 to 1974. Diss. NYU, 1979.

Summerfield, Geoffrey. Fantasy and Reason: Children's Literature in the Eighteenth Century. London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1984.

Townsend, John Rowe. A Sounding of Storytellers: New and Revised Essays on

Contemporary Writers for Children. Middlesex: Kestrel, 1971.

---. Written for Children: An Outline of English-language Children's Literature. Middlesex: Penguin, 1965.

Tucker, Nicholas. "How Children Respond to Fiction". Writers, Critics, and Children: Articles from Children's Literature in Education. Ed. Geoff Fox, Graham Hammond, Terry Jones, Frederic Smith and Kenneth Sterck. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976.

Vandergrift, Kay E. Children's Literature: Theory, Research, and Teaching. Englewood: Libraries Unlimited, 1990.

Wall, Barbara. The Narrator's Voice: The Dilemma of Children's Fiction. NY: St. Martin's P, 1991

Watkins, Tony and Zena Sutherland. "Contemporary Children's Literature (1970-present)". Children's Literature: An Illustrated History. Ed. Peter Hunt. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995. 289-321.

West, Mark I. Roald Dahl. NY: Twayne Publishers, 1992.

---. "The Dorothys of Oz: A Heroine's Unmaking". Stories and Society: Children's Literature in its Social Context. Ed. Dennis Butts. London: Macmillan, 1992.

Wong, Jacky. "Books Open Young Minds". Sunday Young Post 17 May 1998: 1.

Wong, Wai-leung. Hong Kong Literature in the Context of Modern Chinese Literature. HK: CUHK, 1987.

Wordsworth, William. "Ode: Intimations of Immortality". The Norton Anthology of

English Literature. Ed. M. H. Abrams. 5th ed. Vol. 2. NY: W. W. Norton, 1986. 209-216.

Xiao Lu. "Projecting Children's Myth－Mourning Children's Literature" 兒童神話的投影－悼兒童文學. Ming Pao Daily 31 Aug. 1997.

Xie, Chang-qing謝常青. A Brief History of Hong Kong Modern Literature. 《香港新文學簡史》 Guangzhou: The National Chinan UP暨南大學出版社, 1990.

Ye, Yong li葉詠琍. Literary History of Western Children's Literature 《西洋兒童文學史》. Taipei: Dong Dai Publication Co.東大圖書股份有限公司, Republic 71.

Yeo, Wylie. "Little Students in the University". Varsity April 1996: 23.

Yim, Irene嚴吳嬋霞. "Examination of Localization and National Influence in Children's Literature－A Case Study of 'A Tree Named Tang'". 從《姓鄧的樹》探討兒童文學的本土化和民族風格 Presentations in the Seminar of Hong Kong Literature Festival.《香港文學節研討會講稿滙編》 Ed. Urban Council Public Library. HK: Urban Council Public Library, 1997. 161-74.

Zhou, Mi-mi, 周蜜蜜 ed. Exploration of Hong Kong Children's Literature (20s-50s). 《香江兒夢話百年－香港兒童文學探源(二十至五十年代)》 HK: Ming Pao Publishing Co. 明報出版社, 1996.

---, ed. Exploration of Hong Kong Children's Literature (60s-90s). 《香江兒夢話百年－香港兒童文學探源(六十至九十年代)》HK: Ming Pao

Publishing Co., 1996.

Zipes, Jack. Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion: The Classical Genre for Children and the Process of Civilization. NY: Routledge, 1983.